

Katedra: Katedra anglického jazyka

Studijní program: B7057 Specializace v pedagogice

Studijní obor: Anglický jazyk se zaměřením na vzdělávání
Německý jazyk se zaměřením na vzdělávání

ANALÝZA NEJČASTĚJŠÍCH CHYB ČESKÝCH MLUVČÍCH VE VÝSLOVNOSTI A PŘÍZVUKU ANGLIČTINY

An Analysis of the Most Frequent Czech Pronunciation Errors When Speaking English

Bakalářská práce: 2012–FP–KAJ–030

Autor:

PAVLA KROUPOVÁ

Podpis:

Vedoucí práce: Nicola Karásková, M. A.; PGCE

Počet

stran	grafů	obrázků	tabulek	pramenů	příloh
72	5	15	0	54	3

V Liberci dne:

TECHNICKÁ UNIVERZITA V LIBERCI
Fakulta přírodovědně-humanitní a pedagogická
Akademický rok: 2010/2011

ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(PROJEKTU, UMĚLECKÉHO DÍLA, UMĚLECKÉHO VÝKONU)

Jméno a příjmení: **Pavla KROUPOVÁ**
Osobní číslo: **P09000723**
Studijní program: **B7507 Specializace v pedagogice**
Studijní obory: **Anglický jazyk se zaměřením na vzdělávání**
Německý jazyk se zaměřením na vzdělávání
Název tématu: **Analýza nejčastějších českých chyb ve výslovnosti**
a přízvuku angličtiny
Zadávající katedra: **Katedra anglického jazyka**

Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Cíle práce: Cílem práce je na základě provedeného výzkumu analyzovat výslovnost a přízvuk Čechů mluvících anglicky. V rámci výzkumu budou vyhledány chyby, kterých se čeští mluvčí dopouští. Dále bude vyhodnocena závažnost těchto deficitů společně s poskytnutím rad, jak se těmito jevům vyvarovat.

Metody: Pro potřeby šetření budou využity nahrávky, na základě kterých bude analýza provedena.

Požadavky: Minimálně 20 studentů, kteří se zúčastní nahrávání.

Rozsah grafických prací:

Rozsah pracovní zprávy:

Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná**

Seznam odborné literatury:

NUNAN, David. What is This Thing Called Language?. Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. 232 s. ISBN 978-0-230-00848-9.

SNAUWAERT, Fabien. How to Learn English [online]. Fabien Snauwaert, 2010.

MAJOR, Roy C. Foreign Accent : The Ontogeny and Phylogeny of Second Language Phonology [online]. 2010 [cit. 2011-19-04].

ADAMS, Corinne. English Speech Rhythm and the Foreign Learner [online]. [cit. 2011-04-19].

BRIÈRE, Eugène John. A psycholinguistic study of phonological interference [online]. 1968 [cit. 2011-04-19].

Vedoucí bakalářské práce:

Nicola Karásková, M.A.

Katedra anglického jazyka


Datum zadání bakalářské práce: **29. dubna 2011**

Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce: **27. dubna 2012**


doc. RNDr. Miroslav Brzezina, CSc.

děkan

L.S.


PhDr. Marcela Malá, M.A., Ph.D.
vedoucí katedry

V Liberci dne 29. dubna 2011

Čestné prohlášení

Název práce: Analýza nejčastějších chyb českých mluvčích ve výslovnosti a přízvuku angličtiny

Jméno a příjmení autora: Pavla Kroupová

Osobní číslo: P09000723

Byl/a jsem seznámen/a s tím, že na mou bakalářskou práci se plně vztahuje zákon č. 121/2000 Sb. o právu autorském, právech souvisejících s právem autorským a o změně některých zákonů (autorský zákon), ve znění pozdějších předpisů, zejména § 60 – školní dílo.

Prohlašuji, že má bakalářská práce je ve smyslu autorského zákona výhradně mým autorským dílem.

Beru na vědomí, že Technická univerzita v Liberci (TUL) nezasahuje do mých autorských práv užitím mé bakalářské práce pro vnitřní potřebu TUL.

Užiji-li bakalářskou práci nebo poskytnu-li licenci k jejímu využití, jsem si vědom povinnosti informovat o této skutečnosti TUL; v tomto případě má TUL právo ode mne požadovat úhradu nákladů, které vynaložila na vytvoření díla, až do jejich skutečné výše.

Bakalářskou práci jsem vypracoval/a samostatně s použitím uvedené literatury a na základě konzultací s vedoucím bakalářské práce a konzultantem.

Prohlašuji, že jsem do informačního systému STAG vložil/a elektronickou verzi mé bakalářské práce, která je identická s tištěnou verzí předkládanou k obhajobě a uvedl/a jsem všechny systémem požadované informace pravdivě.

V Liberci dne:

Pavla Kroupová

Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to my thesis supervisor, Nicola Karásková, M. A.; PGCE, for her detailed and constructive comments, and for her important support throughout this work. Her extensive discussions around my work have been very helpful for this study.

Besides my advisor, I wish to express my sincere thanks to the staff of the Specialized Secondary School and Vocational School in Horky nad Jizerou, where the research was conducted, for their cooperation. Especially, I would like to thank Bc. Markéta Rynešová who helped me with the research implementation. I also wish to thank the students who took part in the research for their cooperation.

My family deserves special thanks for supporting me during my studies.

Abstract

The subject matter of this thesis is to find out and analyse the most frequent pronunciation errors of Czech secondary student speakers learning English. The most frequent pronunciation errors; however, are not always the most significant. Since the most significant pronunciation errors may cause even misunderstanding and communication breakdown, which is undesirable, the author wanted to find out and analyse these errors so that English learners could avoid them. The author focused on the articulation of individual phonemes. Thus, suprasegmental aspects such as intonation, stress and rhythm were not taken into consideration. In order to find out all the errors mentioned above, the research involving students of English was conducted. As the author anticipated that the students would probably have problems regarding pronunciation in specific areas, the aim was to find out what the expectations and the reality are. The author also asked question: Why do students commit these errors? Thus, a list of theoretical justification for the errors committed is included.

Key words: pronunciation, errors, Czech speakers, English, vowel system, consonant system, aspects of connected speech

Anotace

Předmětem této práce je zjistit jakých nejčastějších výslovnostních chyb v angličtině se čeští studenti středních škol dopouští. Tyto chyby jsou následně analyzovány. Nejčastější výslovnostní chyby však nemusí být nejzásadnější a nejvýznamnější. Nejzásadnější jsou ty, které mohou vést k nedorozumění a tudíž k selhání komunikace. Proto, aby ti, kteří se učí anglicky, mohli tomuto nežádoucímu jevu předejít, obsahuje tato práce i výčet a analýzu nejzásadnějších výslovnostních

chyb, kterých by se mluvčí měli vyvarovat. Autor této práce se zaměřil na artikulaci jednotlivých fonémů a tudíž suprasegmentální jevy intonace, přízvuk a rytmus nebyly při výzkumu zohledňovány. Pro odhalení výslovnostních chyb zmiňovaných výše byl proveden výzkum, do něhož byli studenti zapojeni. Protože autor této práce měl již před vykonáním průzkumu představy, ve kterých oblastech by studenti mohli chybovat, cílem bylo zjistit, zda se tato očekávání shodují s realitou. Autor si také kladl otázku: Proč studenti chybovali v těchto oblastech? Aby tato otázka mohla být zodpovězena, obsahuje tato práce kromě výčtu a analýzy chyb i jejich teoretická opodstatnění.

Klíčová slova: výslovnost, chyby, čeští mluvčí, angličtina, systém samohlásek, systém souhlásek, aspekty souvislého projevu

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	10
1.1. Aims	10
1.2. Organisation.....	10
1.3. Research	11
2. Theoretical Part	11
2.1. The Importance of Pronunciation	11
2.2. The Organs of Speech	14
2.3. Phonetics and Phonology	18
2.4. International Phonetic Alphabet	19
2.5. Introduction to the English Vowel System.....	20
2.5.1. English System of Vowels.....	20
2.5.2. Comparison of English and Czech System of Vowels.....	26
2.6. Introduction to the English Consonant System.....	31
2.6.1. English System of Consonants	31
2.6.2. Comparison of English and Czech System of Consonants	34
2.7. Aspects of Connected Speech.....	38
2.7.1. Connected Speech.....	38
2.7.2. Assimilation.....	39
2.7.3. Elision.....	39
2.7.4. Linking (Liaison)	40
2.7.5. Weak Forms.....	41
3. Practical Part.....	44
3.1. Introduction.....	44
3.2. Aims of the Research	44

3.3. Research Itself.....	46
4. Findings	48
4.1. The Most Frequent Pronunciation Errors	49
4.1.1. Vowels.....	49
4.1.2. Consonants.....	53
4.1.3. Contracted Forms.....	57
4.1.4. Aspects of Connected Speech.....	58
4.1.4.1. Links	58
4.1.4.2. Weak Forms	59
4.2. The Most Serious Pronunciation Errors	60
4.2.1. Vowels.....	61
4.2.1.1. Distinction Between /æ/, /e/ and /ʌ/.....	61
4.2.1.2. Distinction Between /ʌ/ and /ʊ/	61
4.2.1.3. Distinction Between /ɪə/ and /ɜ:/	62
4.2.1.4. Distinction Between /ɔ:/, /əʊ/ and Czech /ou/	62
4.2.1.5. Long vs. Short Vowels.....	62
4.2.2. Consonants.....	62
4.2.2.1. Distinction Between /θ/ and /s/.....	62
4.2.2.2. Distinction Between /ð/, /z/ and /s/	63
4.2.2.3. Distinction Between /n/ and /ŋ/	63
5. Conclusion	63
6. List of References	64
6.1. Bibliography	64
6.2. Internet Resources.....	68
7. Appendices	72

1. Introduction

1. Aims

Pronunciation errors in a language are often considered less important than, say, grammatical or lexical errors. What may be surprising is the fact that some of English learners and even English teachers do not care about correct pronunciation. Since many cases of misunderstanding are caused by mispronunciation, the author of the thesis finds this aspect of a language very important. Thus the author has chosen the pronunciation errors of Czech native speakers of English to be a topic of the thesis.

The aim of this thesis is to give a brief overview of the errors committed by secondary school students chosen as a representative sample. More concretely, students read a text on the basis of which the author had the possibility to find out what are the problematic areas where students are likely to commit pronunciation errors. From all of the errors, the most frequent and most serious were chosen and analysed. Why do students commit them? To be able to answer this question, an error justification is included. Since the author focused on the articulation of individual phonemes, suprasegmental aspects intonation, stress and rhythm were not taken into consideration.

2. Organisation

The thesis itself is divided into a theoretical and a practical part. The theoretical part deals with the clarification of general terminology and subject matter referring to the practical part. The practical part concentrates on a presentation of data collected and afterwards on its evaluation and drawing some conclusions.

3. Research

According to Bajpai, research is a “systematic enquiry that provides information to guide decisions“ (Bajpai, 2011, p. 6). M. S. Khan claims that "research may be defined as a method of studying problems whose solutions are to be derived partly or wholly from facts" (Khan, 2008, p. 3).

In this research data was first collected, evaluated and subsequently analysed.

2. Theoretical Part

1. The Importance of Pronunciation

As mentioned above, the way in which a language or a particular word or sound is pronounced is often considered unimportant (<http://oald8.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/dictionary/pronunciation>). In English language teaching, pronunciation is often given little or even no attention by the teacher of the classroom. There may be several reasons for this. Firstly, ignoring pronunciation in English teaching may be because the teacher lacks of any proper training in phonetics. In other words, the teacher may be unfamiliar with the methods of teaching phonetics. As the result, he or she may ignore the whole issue. Further, if the teacher is a non-native speaker, the uncertainty over the acceptability of his own pronunciation as a model of imitation may be another reason for ignoring pronunciation in English teaching (Brown, 1991, p. 1).

The importance of accurate pronunciation, though, should not be denied – simply because without correct pronunciation it may be very difficult for the

listener to understand what the speaker says. In addition, not only the listener but the speaker, as well, may not be able to understand the spoken language if their pronunciation is not accurate. All this means a huge hindrance to communication, which is, of course, regarded as undesirable (www.pronunciationtips.com).

According to Adam Brown, a learner may employ avoidance strategies in some areas of language. These may include selecting simple grammatical constructions and vocabulary items instead of more complex ones which can not be handled with confidence. But since poor pronunciation can not be compensated in any way, no such strategies can be employed in this area. Therefore, this issue of a language should be given great emphasis (Brown, 1991, p. 1). On that account, the issue of correct pronunciation should be instilled into minds of the language learners from the very early beginning of the language acquisition.

As for English, in 2011, there were approximately 500 million people speaking English as their first language. Moreover, there were about 900 million to 1 billion total English speakers (http://wiki.answers.com/Q/How_many_English_native_speakers_are_there_in_the_world). Therefore, it is evident that there are more pronunciation forms which can be called *standard*. We can, for example, meet with the British Standard, Canadian, American, Australian, New Zealand and other standards (Menhard, 1982, p. 13). A standard accent is the one which, at a given time and place, is generally held up as a model of how one ought to speak (Wells, 1982, p. 34). Even though there are various differences in pronunciations among native speakers, as has been mentioned, no one of the

native speakers would pronounce the *k* in *knee* or *g* in *bright*. According to A. Wallwork, this would be considered an error (Wallwork, 2010, p. 28).

In this context the term *pronunciation error* refers to an inadvertent mistake or inaccuracy in speech committed by a non-native speaker. Pronunciation errors have varying degrees of seriousness. Some of them may not be so serious; however, the most serious errors may even lead to communication failure. For example, for many Czech native speakers it is quite difficult to pronounce consonants such as /θ/ and /ð/. The consonant /θ/ is very often pronounced as /s/, /f/, /t/ and the consonant /ð/ as /dz/, /d/, /z/, /s/. Thus, Czech learners sometimes say /ðɪs ɪz ə bjʊ:tɪfʊl sɪtə/ instead of /ðɪs ɪz ə bjʊ:tɪfʊl θɪtə/ or /aɪd laɪk tə ɡəʊ wɪz jʊ/ instead of /aɪd laɪk tə ɡəʊ wɪθ jʊ/. Since these sentences can be easily understood even though there are pronunciation errors, it can be said that these errors are not so serious. However; Czechs also often say /aɪm sɪŋkɪŋ/ instead of /aɪm θɪŋkɪŋ/. Since in this case it is highly possible that the speaker will not be understood, here the pronunciation error is much more serious.

In order to be able to avoid these errors, one should aim at correct pronunciation. Although there are such situations when the speaker is understood despite the pronunciation error, there are also situations where the pronunciation error may result in misunderstanding. In addition, a learner's pronunciation and fluency is the first thing other people notice during a conversation. To know vocabulary and grammar is very important but useless if you are not able to articulate those words or grammatical structures correctly. Since mispronunciation can easily cause misunderstanding, native speakers are more likely to understand the speaker even if he makes

grammatical mistakes rather than if he makes mistakes in pronunciation. M. A. Bokhari claims that it is not necessary to sound like a native speaker but a foreign learner should be capable of being understood by a variety of listeners (<http://www.scribd.com/doc/12593605/importance-of-Teaching-English-Pronunciation>).

2. The Organs of Speech

As this thesis focuses on mispronunciation, it must be clarified how speech in general and subsequently individual sounds and phonemes of a language are produced. In order to understand this, the organs of speech will be introduced.

Speech has always been considered as a typical mark of the human race. “It is produced by a complicated system of physiological mechanism called the articulating organs“, writes Z. Menhard (Menhard, 1982, p. 17). Although there is no organ in the human body which is reserved solely for the purpose of producing speech, for practical purposes, we usually use the term “*organs of speech*“. This means that no single organ of our body is designed for the purpose of speaking.

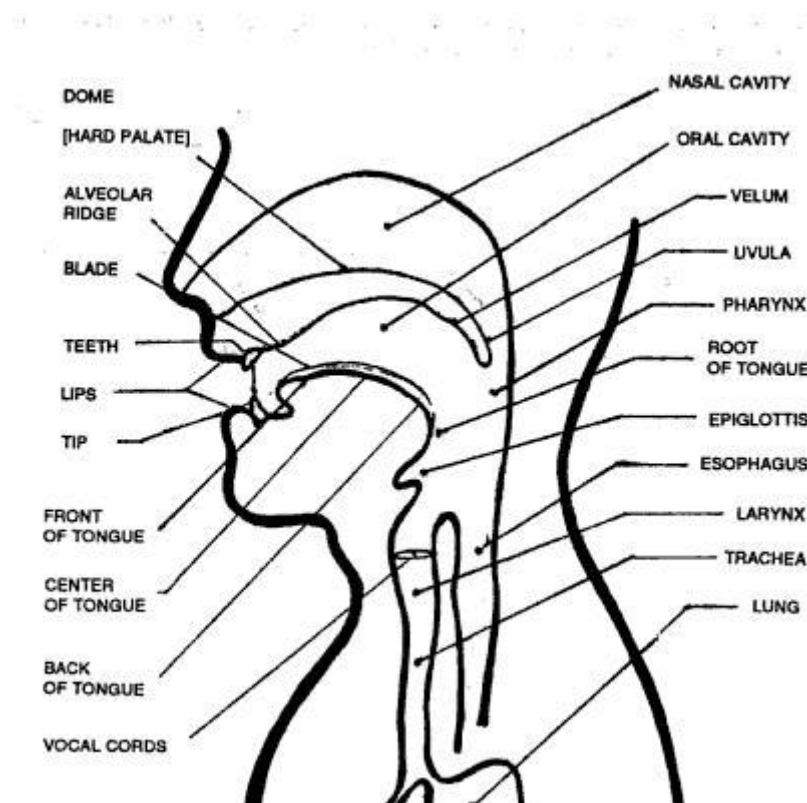


Figure 1 Schematic Diagram of the Organs Speech (Concepcion, de la Cruz and Enriquez, 1994, p. 18)

Parts of the human body such as larynx, teeth, lungs or lips have other significant functions apart from that one enabling us to talk. Since these *other functions* provide that the human body functions properly, they are biologically much more important.

The initiation process of human's vocal activity is the moment when air is expelled from the lungs (see *Figure 1*). This means that lungs serve as an energy source. The air-stream passes through the trachea and reaches the vocal cords (see *Figure 2*) situated in the larynx. The gap between the vocal cords is called glottis (see *Figure 3*). The glottis can be closed – then, no air can pass. Or it can have a narrow opening which can make the vocal folds vibrate producing the *voiced sounds*. It can be also wide open, as in normal

breathing, and, thus, the vibration of the vocal cords is reduced, producing the “voiceless sounds”.

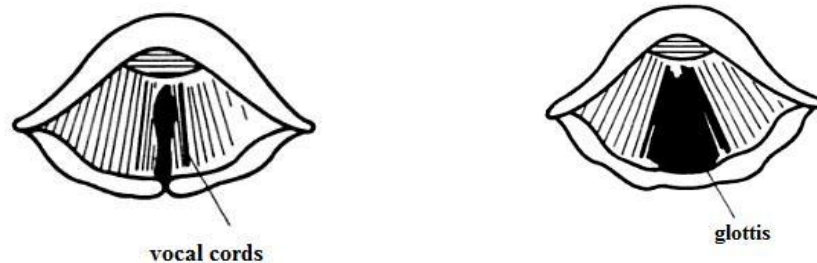


Figure 2 Vocal Cords and **Figure 3** Glottis (Giegerich, 1992, p. 4)

Then the stream of air proceeds to the pharyngeal cavity. After this process the air can go into the nasal or the oral cavity. The velum (also known as the soft palate) is the part responsible for that selection and can be seen below (*Figure 4*). When the velum is raised, the air-stream proceeds to the oral cavity. The stream of air passes through the nasal cavity when the velum is lowered.

The oro-nasal process

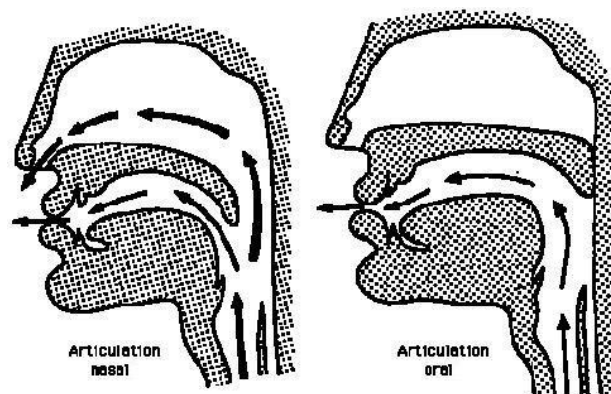


Figure 4 The Oro-nasal Process (<http://website-tools.net/google-keyword/site/www.ugr.es>)

Now comes the process of articulation which takes place in the mouth and is the process through which we differentiate most speech sounds. In the mouth there is the oral cavity, which functions as a resonator, and articulators. Upper and lower lips, upper and lower teeth, tongue (tip, blade, front, back) and roof of the mouth – all these are the articulators (Giegerich, 1992, p. 1-8).

To avoid a distracting accent, it is very important to be able to recognise how sounds are produced and articulated. When a learner has problems with the production of a particular sound it is a good idea to study its production from the theoretical point of view. When learners, for example, struggle with accurate articulation of the phoneme /ð/, they should know how this sound is produced. In this case, the rules are as follows. In order to achieve accurate articulation of /ð/, Marks advises the learner to “make loose contact between the tongue and the back of the teeth and push the air through the gap. /ð/ is different from /θ/ because there is voicing (i.e. vibration from the throat)” (Marks, 2007, p. 38). What may also be helpful is an illustrative representation as shown below. It can be seen that the articulators play a significant role in terms of accurate articulation.

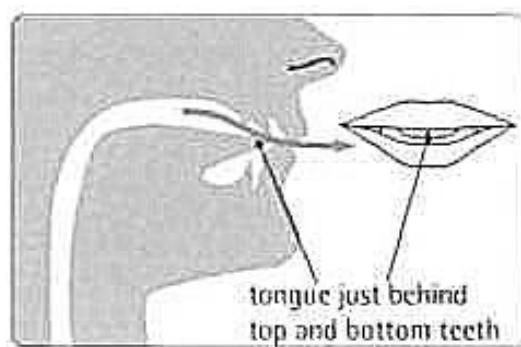


Figure 5 How to Make the Sound /ð/ (Marks, 2007, p. 38)

In the following section the two linguistic disciplines which are concerned with speech and thus implicitly with pronunciation, phonetics and phonology, will be briefly introduced.

3. Phonetics and Phonology

As has already been stated, pronunciation is often given little attention or it is even completely ignored by the teachers at Czech primary and secondary schools. This attitude of some teachers has various justifications. One of the reasons may be the teacher's lack of any proper training in phonetics. Therefore, phonetics and phonology should be studied in order to improve the situation. Even though phonetics is an important aspect of teaching in English language, it is rarely taught at Czech schools.

Z. Menhard defines phonetics in his publication as a "linguistic discipline dealing with the phonic substance of human speech. It studies speech sounds of a language, their production and perception, and their modulation in connected speech. It is a highly developed science incorporating parts of physiology and physics" (Menhard, 1982, p. 10).

Phonetics explores how sounds are produced, transmitted and perceived. Phonetics studies the physical properties of the sound waves as well. The study of this discipline may help the English learners to improve their pronunciation in a way that it describes how the sounds of speech are produced. The theoretical description may be very helpful.

Phonology is another linguistic discipline and, unlike phonetics, it focuses on the study of the sound structure of language. It is concerned with the behaviour, function and organization of sounds. Phonology, according to

Genetti, concerns the “manner in which sounds combine and interact so that they may differentiate meaning“ (Genetti, 2007, p. 32). For foreign learners it may be useful to study phonology because they may compare, for example, the phonological system of their native language with the phonological system of the language they learn. The study would reveal what the differences between these systems are. The recognition of the system differences may be very useful. When a Czech student compares the phonological system of Czech and English consonants, he discovers that in Czech there is no /θ/ consonant. As a consequence, the student can pay attention to this sound and practise its pronunciation in order to learn it. The undesirable situation of hearing the Czech speaker saying /sæŋk jʊ/ instead of /θæŋk jʊ/ would not occur.

4. International Phonetic Alphabet

English spelling is often contradictory. It lacks clear patterns. Patterns which do exist are numerous, with a large number of exceptions, and all of this makes it very difficult for the learner of English as a foreign language to master pronunciation. This means that English language is not an easy language to learn because the English spelling of words does not have a direct indication of how they should be pronounced. Therefore, there is an International Phonetic Alphabet, which breaks down each phoneme into its phonological component. The International Phonetic Alphabet puts all of the individual sounds of all of the languages across the world into one alphabet. Although it is relatively complex to learn, once mastered, learners of English would have the ability to teach themselves pronunciation from a dictionary,

and should notice improved pronunciation of individual words (<http://www.tesolcourse.com/tesol-articles/phonetics-phonology/>).

When we want to take down sounds as accurately as possible, we can not do so without the International Phonetic Alphabet. It is insufficient to depend on traditional spelling. Thus, we usually use an IPA for the purpose of writing down speech sounds. Every single sound is always represented by the same symbol. These symbols representing speech sounds are so called *phonetic symbols*. All the phonetic symbols make up a *phonetic alphabet*. In order to distinguish phonetic symbols from letters, they are enclosed either in square brackets [] or in slashes / / (Skandera and Burleigh, 2011, p. 7-8).

5. Introduction to the English Vowel System

Since the Czech vowel and consonant system is different from the English one in many aspects, it often causes difficulties to English learners to pronounce some individual sounds correctly. The sounds which do not occur in a language but do exist in another one are for foreign learners often difficult to pronounce. Thus, they are often mispronounced. The mispronunciation is in many cases affected by the mother tongue and the interference occurs. In order to see what the different sounds which are problematic for Czech students to learn, the Czech and English vowel and subsequently consonant system will be introduced.

2.5.1. English System of Vowels

The word *vowel* is probably known to nearly every person. Roach states that “the most common view is that vowels are sounds in which there is no

obstruction to the flow of air as it passes from the larynx to the lips“ (Roach, 2009, p. 10).

Vowels are sounds made by voiced air passing through different shapes of mouth. These differences in the mouth-shape are caused by different positions of the tongue and lips. It seems to be much easier to recognize the positions of the lips. On the other hand, it is very difficult to see and feel the different tongue positions. Since we cannot see the locations of the tongue during the process of vowel pronunciation, a detailed description of the tongue position for a certain vowel does not actually help us to pronounce it correctly. It follows that if we want to learn these sounds efficiently, we have to do it a way of listening and speaking (O'Connor, 1980, p. 79). Skandera and Burleigh in their publication state that “even though most languages have over twice as many consonants as vowels, vowels can be seen as predominant. They carry most of the loudness, pitch, and tone of voice that we perceive in concrete utterances, and since their sound quality varies considerably from region to region, vowels make up most of the characteristics that distinguish different accents of the same tongue“ (Skandera and Burleigh, 2005, p. 31). This means that different accents are probable to have different vowel system. English belongs to the group of languages dialects of which differ primarily in vowel sounds (Ladefoged, 2005, p. 27).

English vowels can be categorized on the basis of various features out of which the three most important and most general were chosen.

Firstly, the length of vowel sound is important. On the basis of this feature, we distinguish between long and short vowels. In addition, there are also alternations of length. These involve both the lengthening of short vowels and the shortening of long vowels (Stankiewicz, 1993, p. 321).

Secondly, the tongue can be situated either in the front or back of mouth. This means the position of the tongue in the horizontal line of the mouth. From this point of view we divide vowels of English into three categories – front, central and back vowels.

The third feature, the position of the tongue in the vertical direction, can be observed. This means that English has high, mid, low vowels or in another terminology close, half-close, half-open and open vowels (van Gelderen, 2006, p. 19).

This is the concrete division of English vowels according to the three most important groups mentioned above:

According to the first point of view, the length of the vowel sound, we distinguish between short and long vowels.

The symbols of seven short vowels are following: /æ/, /ʌ/, /e/, /ɪ/, /ɒ/, /ʊ/, /ə/.

These are some example words:

/æ/: *mad, hat, cat*

/ʌ/: *but, some, rush*

/e/: *yes, red, pet*

/ɪ/: *ship, mist, hit*

/ɒ/: *mock, hot, dot*

/ʊ/: *put, book, push*

/ə/: *about, after, letter*

In English there are long vowels as well. There are their symbols: /ɑ:/, /ɔ:/, /i:/, /u:/, /ɜ:/ and examples:

/ɑ:/: *card, hard, far*

/ɔ:/: *law, horse, corn*

/i:/: *leave, need, peace*

/u:/: *soon, mood, soothe*

/ɜ:/: *bird, learn, earn*

The second criterion divides vowels into front, central and back vowels. The front vowels are those that are articulated near the front of the oral cavity. More concretely, the front of the tongue is raised in the direction of the hard palate. The central vowels are the ones which are articulated near the centre of the vocal cavity. Finally, the back vowels are articulated near the rear of the vocal cavity. This is the process when the back of the tongue is raised in the direction of the soft palate. Here is the subsequent division:

Front vowels: /i:/, /ɪ/, /e/, /æ/

Central vowels: /ə/, /ɜ:/, /ʌ/

Back vowels: /u:/, /ʊ/, /ɔ:/, /ɑ:/, /ɒ/

As the third distinctive feature is the position of the tongue in the vertical direction, English vowels are further divided into close, half-close, half-open and open.

According to David Jones, close vowels are “those in which the tongue is as high as possible consistently with not producing audible friction.

Half-close vowels are those in which the tongue occupies a position about one-third of the distance from *close* to *open*.

Half-open vowels are those in which the tongue occupies a position about two-thirds of the distance from *close* to *open*.

Open vowels are those in which the tongue is as low as possible (Collins, 2003, p. 17).

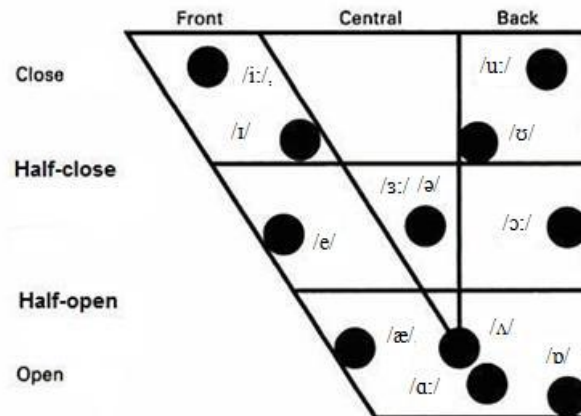


Figure 6 A Vowel Diagram (Ashby, 2005, p. 28)

Up to this point the subject matter related to vowels included only monophthongs also called *pure vowels*. The attribute *pure* indicates that the vowel of that character remains constant and does not glide, due to the stillness of the organs of speech during their production (Menhard, 1982, p. 25). Furthermore, the tongue and lips are relatively stationary while these vowels are being pronounced. Now let us turn to introduce another group of English vowels – diphthongs and triphthongs.

The word *diphthong* comes from Greek and its meaning is *double sound*. The diphthong is a glide from a vowel to another one – it starts at one vowel-position, and moves towards another. In terms of length, these sounds are similar to the long vowels rather than to short ones. The first part of the diphthong is much stronger and longer than the second part, as for instance,

most of the diphthong /aɪ/ (as in the word *my*) consists of the /a/ vowel. Only the last quarter of the diphthong /aɪ/ does the glide to /ɪ/ become noticeable. As the glide to /ɪ/ happens, the loudness of the sound declines. As a consequence, the /ɪ/ vowel is then shorter and quieter than the /a/ vowel (Roach, 2009, p. 17).

In English there are eight diphthongs which are divided into two groups – centring and closing. The first group, centring diphthongs, end with a glide towards the central vowel /ə/ and includes three diphthongs – /eə/, /ɪə/ and /ʊə/. To give an example, the process which is going on during the pronunciation of the diphthong /ɪə/ is as follows: the glide begins with a tongue position that is taken for /ɪ/ and moves in the direction of /ə/. This phoneme is found in the words like *near*, *dear* or *here*. Another group English diphthongs are divided into are closing diphthongs. Those are further divided into ending in /ɪ/ and ending in /ʊ/. Again, that means that they end either with a glide towards /ɪ/ or with a glide towards /ʊ/. Among the closing diphthongs ending in /ɪ/ are the diphthongs /eɪ/, /aɪ/, /ɔɪ/ and among those ending in /ʊ/ are the diphthongs /aʊ/ and /əʊ/. Below there is a diagram illustrating the division of the English diphthongs (<http://www.slideserve.com/nuncio/english-diphthongs>).

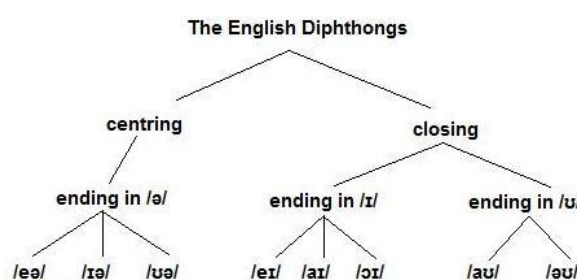


Figure 7 (A Diphthong Diagram – Author’s Own Modification)

There are five triphthongs in English. Roach in his publication *English Phonetics and Phonology: A Practical Course* claims that triphthongs are the most complex English sounds. These are a glide from a vowel to another one and then to a third. What is important is that this process goes on without any interruption. There are the five triphthongs of English with examples: /eɪə/ (*payer, player*), /aɪə/ (*dryer, trier*), /ɔɪə/ (*employer, royal*), /aʊə/ (*shower, power*), /əʊə/ (*slower, lower*). It can be said that the triphthongs are composed of the five closing diphthongs already mentioned with /ə/ added on the end (Roach, 2009, p. 19).

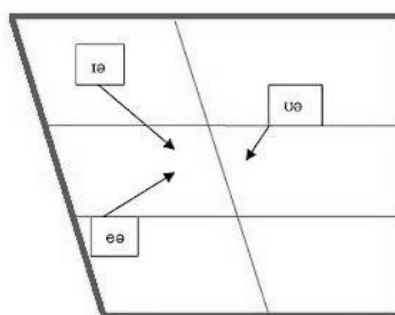


Figure 8 Centring Diphthongs (www.thefanaticsofphonetics.blogspot.com)

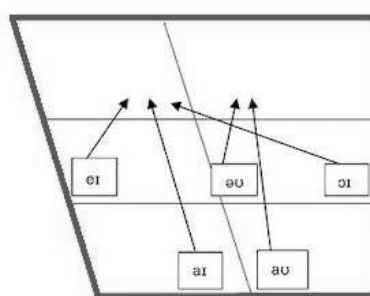


Figure 9 Closing Diphthongs (www.thefanaticsofphonetics.blogspot.com)

2.5.2. Comparison of English and Czech System of Vowels

Generally, it is very difficult to compare English and Czech because of following facts. Qualitative relations of the English and Czech vowels are hardly to be compared as well as it is not easy to compare them quantitatively (Menhard, 1982, p. 93).

Under the term *quantity* we understand length of a vowel. Thus, words *bin* /bɪn/ and *beam* /bi:m/ are quantitatively different (<http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O29-VOWELQUANTITY.html>). In Czech words such as /bit/ (byt) and /bi:t/ (být/bít), the length of the vocal determines the meaning of the word – in this concrete situation the misunderstanding can occur because both the word with the short vowel and the word with the long vowel have its specific meaning – /bit/ (byt): flat and /bi:t/ (být/bít): to be/to beat.

The *quality* of a vowel is the property that makes one vowel sound different from another. For example, /i:/ as in *sheep* from /ɪ/ as in *ship*. The quality of a vowel is determined by the position of the lips, tongue, and lower jaw, and the resulting size and shape of the mouth and pharynx (<http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O29-VOWELQUALITY.html>). Further, for example, it has to be distinguished between /i:/ (*feel*) and /ɪ/ (*fill*), /a:/ (*dark*) and /ʌ/ (*duck*) or /u:/ (*pool*) and /ʊ/ (*pull*). In the Czech language, especially in the case of certain dialects, the standard articulation of vocals may not be kept. Thus, /studentum/ may be heard instead of /studentu:m/, /mislim/ instead of /misli:m/ or /prosim/ instead of /prosi:m/. In these situations, the non-standard vocal articulation does not cause the misunderstanding.

English quality is a principal distinctive property, while in the Czech language the quality of a vowel sound does not have any distinctive function. The *quantity*, on the contrary, is a significant factor in Czech, while in English it is a secondary feature. According to Menhard, “the length both in Czech and English vowels has a distinctive function, but otherwise there are great differences between quantity in Czech and in English” (Menhard, 1982, p. 93).

Although the system of the Czech and English language is different, Czech people learn the English language and English people learn Czech. The Czech system of vowels is not as complex as the English one, on the contrary, it is very simple. It contains only ten simple vowel phonemes which are divided into short and long (Skaličková, 1979, p. 24-25). The Czech vowels are articulated in a different manner and in different places than the corresponding English vowels (Menhard, 1982, p. 93). In the Czech language the tongue tip is almost always in contact with the bottom of the oral cavity (lower gums and incisors). Since in English the tongue tip almost never touches these areas of the mouth as in Czech, English vowels can be difficult to pronounce for Czech speakers (Skaličková, 1979, p. 26).

Czech short vowels: /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, /u/

Czech long vowels: /a:/, /ɛ:/, /i:/, /ɔ:/, /u:/

compared to

English short vowels: /æ/, /ʌ/, /e/, /ɪ/, /ɒ/, /ʊ/, /ə/

English long vowels: /ɑ:/, /ɔ:/, /i:/, /u:/, /ɜ:/

It is important to mention that in English there are such vowels which do not occur in the Czech language. Their symbols are following: /æ/, /ə/, /ɜ:/, /ʌ/. These may consequently be the most problematic for Czech people learning English to pronounce.

Another important fact is that all the Czech vowels are voiced. In English there is an important distinction between voiced and voiceless vowels. Voicing is a term used to refer to the vibration of the vocal cords. A sound made by this vibration is voiced. On the other hand, a sound made without vibration is called voiceless. Most vowels in most languages are voiced, but there are also languages in which voiceless vowels do occur (Roach, 2006, p. 548). English vowels are voiceless in some environments, such as when aspiration is involved. For example the first vowel in words “perhaps“ or “potato“ is often voiceless (<http://en.citizendium.org/wiki/Vowel>).

The diagram below shows the Czech and English system of vowels.

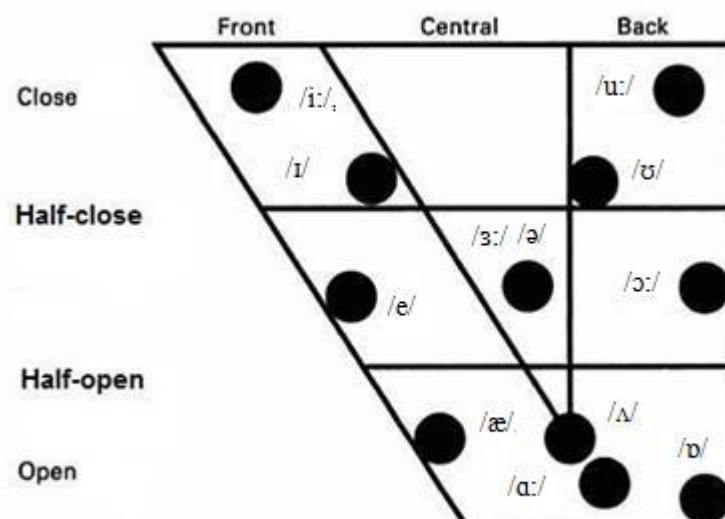


Figure 10 English System of Vowels (Ashby, 2005, p. 28)

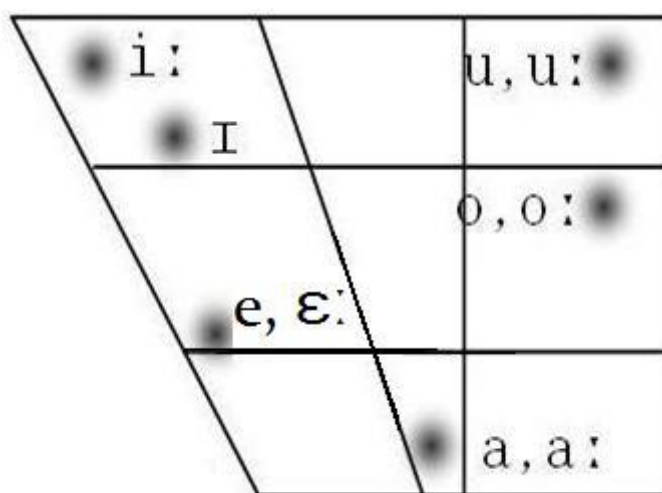


Figure 11 Czech System of Vowels

(<https://sites.google.com/site/frufusphonoweb/cz---kapitoly/samohlasky/system-cesky-ch-samohlasek>)

When we go further and want to compare Czech and English diphthongs, the Czech language in comparison with English, again, contains a lower number of them. In Czech there are only three diphthongs and in English there are eight. These are symbols of the Czech diphthongs: /au/, /eu/, /ou/. It

shows that the Czech vowel system is not as complex as the English one. As the consequence, Czechs are likely to say /houm/ instead of /həʊm/ or /ʃou/ instead of /ʃəʊ/, may have problems to pronounce words in which diphthongs or triphthongs which do not exist in Czech occur. These are words like *pair* /peə/, *here* /hɪə/, *sure* /ʃʊə/, *layer* /leɪə/, *mower* /məʊə/.

6. Introduction to the English Consonant System

2.6.1. English System of Consonants

The second class of sounds next to vowels are consonants. These are sounds in which there is an obstruction to the flow of air that is being pushed out of the lungs in some way. In English there are twenty-four consonants which can be classified according to voicing, manner and place of articulation.

As has already been stated, voicing is an articulatory process during which the vocal cords do vibrate. We distinguish between voiced and voiceless consonants. This is a division of them:

English voiced consonants:

/b/, /d/, /g/, /v/, /ð/, /z/, /ʒ/, /dʒ/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /r/, /w/, /l/, /j/

English voiceless consonants:

/p/, /t/, /k/, /f/, /θ/, /s/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/, /h/

The manner of articulation refers to the way in which speech sounds are made by the speech organs. According to Olive, Greenwood and Coleman “this classification describes the degree and manner of closure of the vocal

tract, or the shape of the articulators.“ On the basis of these factors we distinguish between so called plosives or stops, fricatives, affricates, nasals, laterals and approximants. Plosives or stops are produced by a total obstructing of the air flow and then letting it go abruptly. This means that the “stopping“ of the airstream results in little or no sound which is followed by a sudden burst of air when the obstruction is released (Olive, Greenwood and Coleman, 1993, p. 25-27). The manner of articulation used in producing fricatives involves almost hindering the air flow and afterwards having it push through the very narrow opening. When the airstream is pushed through, a kind of friction is produced (Yule, 2010, p. 31-32). Affricates combine features of plosives and fricatives. Although these are a combination of two groups of sounds, they function as a single unit (Olive, 1993, p. 25-27). During the pronunciation of nasals, the airstream is obstructed in the mouth and deflected through the nasal cavity. When you pronounce a lateral there is some obstruction which is not intensive enough to cause friction. Finally, when the air flows freely without audible friction we talk about approximants.

The concrete division of English consonants according to a manner of articulation is following:

Plosives or stops: /p/, /t/, /k/, /b/, /d/, /g/

Fricatives: /f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /h/

Affricates: /tʃ/, /dʒ/

Nasals: /m/, /n/, /ŋ/

Laterals: /l/

Approximants: /w/, /r/, /j/

The third criterion, place of articulation, refers to the place where consonants are made (Whitley, 2002, p. 13-14). In other words, this criterion identifies the location where the articulators form a constriction. In addition, which articulators are actually involved is an important fact as well. According to the place of articulation it is distinguished between bilabial, labiodental, dental, alveolar, palato-alveolar, palatal, velar and glottal consonants. Bilabials are sounds formed by closing of the lips. A labiodental consonant is the sound which is produced by the upper front teeth contacting the lower lip. When you pronounce dentals the tongue tip is located behind the upper front teeth. Alveolars are that sounds which are produced by the front part of the tongue touching the alveolar ridge. Palato-alveolar sounds are made with the tongue between the alveolar and palatal locations. Palatals are formed with the tongue raised toward the hard palate. Velars are produced when the back of the tongue touches the velum (also called the soft palate). Finally, a glottal consonant is a sound which is produced without the active use of the tongue and other parts of the mouth (Yule, 2010, p. 28-30).

The following diagram shows the concrete division of the English consonants according to the place of articulation:

Table of English Consonants								
	bilabial	labio -dental	dental	alveolar	post -alveolar	palatal	velar	glottal
plosive	p b			t d			k g	
affricate					tʃ dʒ			
fricative		f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ			h
nasal	m			n			ŋ	
lateral				l				
approximant	w				r	j		

Figure 12 Table of English Consonants

(<http://www.tuninst.net/Romabama/Bur-Gramm1899/ch02/ch02.htm>)

Some authorities consider the consonant *w* as a labiovelar approximant, not strictly as a bilabial one. According to Mielke, “labiovelar consonants are generally treated as though they possess properties of bilabial consonants as well as velar consonants“ (Mielke, 2008, p. 124).

2.6.2. Comparison of English and Czech System of Consonants

It is essential to mention that the classification of Czech consonants differs from typical charts of the English consonants in several points. This is because in Czech there are such consonants which do not occur in English. As a consequence, the Czech consonants can not be classified in the same way as the English ones. The table of the Czech consonants can be seen below.

Table of Czech Consonants							
	labial (labiovelar)	labiodental	dental	alveolar, postalveolar	palatal	velar	glottal
occlusive	p b			t d	c ɟ	k g	
semi-occlusive				ç tʃ			
constrictive		f v		s ʃ z ʒ	j	x	h
nasal	m			n	ɲ	(ŋ)	
l- and r-sounds				l r ɾ			

Figure 13 Table of Czech Consonants (Skaličková, 1979, p. 71)

There are many differences between the Czech and English consonants that may result in the mispronunciation of certain consonants. Firstly, there are such consonants which do occur in one language but do not occur in the second one and vice versa. It is obvious that Czech learners mispronounce mainly consonants which do not occur in the Czech language but do in English. These are:

/w/, /θ/, /ð/

Symbols of Czech consonants which do not exist in English are:

ď /j/, ch /x/, ň /ɲ/, ř /r̝/, ť /c/

There are sounds which do exist in both languages but they are represented by different letters:

Czech c is spelled in English as ts (*it's*)

Czech č is spelled in English as ch (*chocolate*)

Czech j is spelled in English as y (*yes*)

Czech š is spelled in English as sh (*shock*)

Although there are many consonants in English which do occur in the Czech language, their pronunciation can be slightly different. Czech /r/, for example, is according to Menhard, “rolled but English /r/ is mostly a voiced post-alveolar lingual fricative, or a voiced post-alveolar frictionless continuant¹” (Menhard, 1982, p. 183). This means that although some phonemes occur in both languages, their pronunciation is not always the same. As for the consonant /r/, since differences in articulation and distribution are found in various kinds of English, pronunciation of this consonant even differs in English as such.

Another area where Czech speakers are likely to commit pronunciation errors is the issue of consonant voicing. Czech speakers mispronounce mainly the consonants which occur at the end of words. English voiced consonants which may be found at the end of words are /b/, /d/, /g/, /v/, /ð/, /z/, /ʒ/, /dʒ/, /l/, /r/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/. Other voiced consonants are also /j/, /w/, /h/ but these do not occur at the end of a word. English voiceless consonants which may occur at the end of words are /p/, /t/, /k/, /f/, /θ/, /s/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/. In English there are such pairs of consonants which differ in voicing. These are /b/ versus /p/, /d/ vs. /t/, /g/ vs. /k/, /v/ vs. /f/, /ð/ vs. /θ/, /z/ vs. /s/, /ʒ/ vs. /ʃ/, /dʒ/ vs. /tʃ/. In addition, Czechs often devoice final /z/ in verbs in 3rd person singular, which is a mistake. In Czech, unlike English, if the voiced consonant which has its voiceless constituent occurs at the end of a word, it is pronounced as voiceless. In other words, the voiced/voiceless distinction is neutralized in the final position in Czech. In order to demonstrate this here are some examples:

¹ A consonant that can be prolonged as long as the breath lasts without a change of quality.

plod articulated as /plot/, *mág* articulated as /ma:k/, *hrb* articulated as /hrp/, *dav* articulated as /dav/. This is a problem since Czech speakers often do the same in English, which is a mistake. In English the voiced consonant at the end of a word is always voiced. Thus, *mob* must be pronounced as /mɒb/ not /mɒp/, *dog* must be pronounced as /dɒg/ not /dɒk/, *bud* must be pronounced as /bʌd/ not /bʌt/. Hence misunderstandings can easily occur and thus Czech and other learners should be aware of the importance of voiced and voiceless consonants in order to prevent this (<http://www.helpforenglish.cz/vyslovnost/c2009012002-znele-a-neznele-souhlasky-na-konci-slov.html>).

Since in Czech the consonant /s/ is always pronounced as /s/, Czech speakers may have problems with pronunciation of the letter *s* when it appears at the end of a word. In English *s* can be pronounced as /s/, /z/ or /ɪz/ in the final position. The rules are following. If the final /s/ is preceded by /p/, /t/, /k/, /f/ or /θ/, it is pronounced as /s/. Example words are *ships*, *hits*, *bricks*, *laughs*, *maths*. These sounds are all unvoiced, which means that the vocal cords do not vibrate when the sound is produced. If a word ends in /s/ which is preceded by /b/, /d/, /g/, /v/, /ð/, /l/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, it is pronounced as /z/. Example words are *grabs*, *lids*, *pigs*, *leaves*, *breathes*, *hills*, *trams*, *earns*, *paintings*. If the final /s/ is preceded by /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/, /dʒ/, it is pronounced as /ɪz/. Example words are *places*, *chooses*, *wishes*, *matches*, *pages*. Czech speakers often do not follow these rules. Thus, they say /hɪls/ instead of /hɪlz/, /træms/ instead of /træmz/ or /wɪʃɪs/ instead of /wɪʃɪz/ (<http://www.vivquarry.com/wkshts/pron.html>).

Apart from correct pronunciation of individual phonemes, in order to master the language properly, the learner should also care about suprasegmental features of a language. Mastering of these features of a language has indisputably many advantages which will be mentioned below.

7. Aspects of Connected Speech

2.7.1. Connected Speech

The term connected speech refers to spoken language when it analysed as a continuous sequence, as in normal utterances and conversations (Crystal, 2008, p. 101). Speech sounds rarely occur in isolation. When we speak naturally, we do not pronounce a word, then make a stop, then say another word of the sentence and so on. This means that people naturally do not speak in separate words but in logical connected groups of words (<http://www.masterspokenenglish.com/6connectedpg.htm>). In most languages we can find occasional cases where a speaker makes a single segment in isolation with no sound preceding or following it (as *sh* when we want to call on quiet or *ah* when we are surprised). However, such cases are rare. It is natural for segments to fit closely together with each other (<http://www.personal.rdg.ac.uk/~llsroach/phon2/asscoareli-into.htm>). When words are combined together there is a tendency for each sound to be influenced by the neighbouring phonemes. This means that the end and beginning of some words can change depending on the sounds which precede or follow them. Connected speech is the key to gaining a natural, smooth-flowing style of speech (<http://www.masterspokenenglish.com/6connectedpg.htm>).

Connected speech is another issue where differences between Czech and English can be found. For both languages there are certain rules of connected speech production. These differ in many aspects. Thus, Czech learners may not be able to speak native-like. In the following lines this will be developed.

The aspects of connected speech are *assimilation*, *elision*, *linking* and *weak forms*. (Menhard, 1982, p. 205).

2.7.2. Assimilation

Skandera and Burleigh explain that “assimilation is the process whereby one sound becomes more like, or identical with, a neighbouring sound regarding one or more of the distinctive features.” This means that one phoneme is replaced by another under the influence of the adjacent sound. It is a process which varies in extent according to the rate and style of speaking. It can rather be found in casual, rapid speech and less likely in careful, slow speech. The term *assimilation* originates from Latin *assimilatio*, meaning “making one thing like another“. For example, *Could you?* can be pronounced either as /kʊd jʊ/ or under the influence of assimilation as /kʊdʒu/. This shows that /d/ followed by /j/ result in production of /dʒ/.

In Czech assimilation also occurs but different rules are followed. Thus, this may result in mispronunciation of Czech speakers. This issue has to do with voicing of consonants. As mentioned, in Czech paired voiced consonants become voiceless in the final position. As this has already been stated, for more information, see chapter 2.6.2.

2.7.3. Elision

The nature of another aspect of connected speech, *elision*, according to Roach, may be stated quite simply: “under certain circumstances sounds disappear“ (Roach, 2009, p. 110-113). In other words, this is the omission of a vowel, consonant, or syllable in pronunciation. As with assimilation, elision is typical of casual, rapid speech (Skandera and Burleigh, 2011, p. 89). It is claimed that if a word remains perfectly intelligible without a certain sound, people tend to drop that sound, claims Menhard in his publication (Menhard, 1982, p. 205). There are examples: *potato* /p^hteɪtəʊ/ (the vowel in the first syllable may disappear), *lots of them* /lɒts ə ðəm/ (loss of final /v/ in *of* before a consonant).

Elision occurs in Czech, too but it is far less common. Example words are *jsem* /sem/, *jsi* /si/, *jsme* /sme/. Here it can be seen that /j/ is not pronounced.

2.7.4. Linking (Liaison)

Linking is a process when distinct words are linked together into groups of words. When speaking in a natural, conversational and fluent way, English speakers link words together to help the smooth flow of speech (Boyer, 2003, p. 51). Examples for better understanding are:

Who _else?

/w/

My _aunt is so kind!

/j/

He's been waiting for _an hour.

/r/

Unlike English, in Czech vowels which occur at the end and at the beginning of a word are not linked together by means of linking sounds. Thus, Czech speakers often do speak in a way that they do pronounce each word rather individually like in /do ? indie/ or /pro ? Annu/ (Krčmová, 1996, p. 128). Thus, Czechs say /pro ? otce/ and /mezi ? ulicemi/. Consequently, Czech speakers may tend to say /tʊ ? ɪŋɡlənd/ instead of /tʊ^w ɪŋɡlənd/. Since this is not natural for English, it may be another aspect hindering Czech speakers to sound native-like.

2.7.5. Weak Forms

Another aspect of connected speech are so called *weak forms*. In English there are certain words which have one pronunciation (strong) chiefly when isolated, and another (weak) when not stressed within a phrase. For example: *a car* /eɪ kɑː/ (the indefinite article *a* is pronounced as a strong form and is stressed), meanwhile in connected speech an indefinite article in a sentence *I bought a car.* is pronounced as /ə/ and is unstressed – /aɪ bɔːt ə kɑː/ (http://www.llas.ac.uk/materialsbank/mb081/page_19.htm). These examples show that when a word is in isolation, it is usually stressed. When a word is not isolated, it can be pronounced either in a weak or strong form as in the following examples. It will be demonstrated that the word *that* can be pronounced in two ways – in a weak form /ðət/ or strong form /ðæt/. Weak form: *I hope that she will.* /aɪ həʊp ðət ʃi wɪl/; strong form: *I like that.* /aɪ laɪk ðæt/ – strong form. As has already been stated, weak forms occur only in unstressed positions. Strong forms are used mainly when the word is stressed, but they also occur in unstressed positions (Roach, 2009, p. 89).

As Daniel Jones claims, “a weak form of a word is generally distinguished from a strong form either by a difference of vowel-sound, or by the absence of a sound (vowel or consonant), or by the difference in the length of a vowel“ (Jones, 1956. p. 126).

Almost all the words which have both a strong and a weak form belong to so called *function words*. These are words which do not have clear lexical meanings or obvious concepts associated with them, including prepositions such as *of* and *in*; conjunctions such as *or*, *and*, and *but*; the articles *the* and *a/an*, and pronouns such as *it*. Functions words specify grammatical relations and have little or no semantic content (Fromkin, 2010, p. 79). These words are in certain circumstances pronounced in their strong forms but more frequently in their weak forms.

The above mentioned *circumstances* under which strong forms are preferred, as follows:

When a weak-form word occurs at the end of a sentence. Example: *I'm revising for my exams.* (*for* is pronounced in its weak form – /fə/); *What are you looking for?* (*for* is pronounced in its strong form because it is at the end of the sentence – /fɔ:/).

When a weak-form word stays in contrast with another one. Example: *The present is for him, not from him.* (*for* and *from* are pronounced in strong forms – /fɔ:/, /frɒm/)

When a weak-form word is given stress in order to be emphasized. Example: *She must stop smoking.* (*must* is pronounced in its strong form – /mʌst/)

The last circumstance is that when a weak-form word is being cited or quoted, it is pronounced in its strong form. Example: *I wrote ‘and’ at the end of a sentence, which was a mistake.* (*and* is pronounced in its strong form, again – /ænd/) (Roach, 2009, 89-90)

Since Czechs often do not use the aspects of connected speech while speaking but the native-speakers do, their speech may sound unnatural. This may be caused by the differences between the nature of Czech and English. One of these differences is the fact that the quality of Czech vowels does not depend on their position in words (Palková, 1994, p. 279). Thus, none of the Czech vowels are reduced. Compared to English, the vowel reduction is an important phenomenon. As the consequence, Czech speakers often use too many strong forms, which hinders them to sound native-like. Thus, most English native speakers find an “all-strong-form“ pronunciation unnatural and foreign-sounding. In addition, Roach argues that “speakers who are not familiar with the use of weak forms are likely to have difficulty understanding speakers who do use weak forms“ (Roach, 2009, p. 89).

Generally, it can be said that the ability to handle the aspects of connected speech is a good indication of proficiency in the language (<http://www.slideshare.net/cupidlucid/aspects-of-connected-speech-presentation>). An unquestionable benefit, for example, is the ability to understand the native speakers who speak fluently and use weak forms, linking and other aspects of connected speech. Alameen says that a research conducted by Haiké shows that linking and other aspects of connected speech can be used as a parameter of fluency to differentiate native speakers and non-native speakers. What is more, the results of the research show that while

high-proficiency English learners approximated the performance of the native speaker in sentence reading tasks, the intermediate-proficiency learners often lagged far behind (<http://books.google.cz/books?id=-tsAgLJm1w8C&pg=PA19&dq=connected+speech+proficiency&hl=cs&sa=X&ei=XaXQT9TWJY25hAed6cTzCw&ved=0CFQQ6AEwBQ#v=onepage&q=connected%20speech%20proficiency&f=false>).

3. Practical Part

1. Introduction

In the practical part the aims of the thesis are introduced. This part of the thesis includes a description of the research project in general. More concretely, the representative sample and the methods of the research are described. The collected materials of the research are presented and subsequently analysed and evaluated. There is also an effort to justify the errors which have been found. It means: “Why do students commit these mistakes?”, “What are the reasons?” It may be based on the differences of natures of Czech and English. Why did a student mispronounce /ɜ:/ in “curtains”? Because this phoneme does not exist in Czech? Because he does not know the word? Because he does know the word but has not heard it before?

2. Aims of the Research

The aim of the research was to map the most frequent pronunciation errors of Czech secondary student speakers learning English. Since the most frequent errors are not always the most serious, the author of the thesis has chosen the most serious mistakes, too. These are mistakes which may cause

misunderstanding and hinder communication, which is undesirable. Since the author of the thesis focused on articulation of individual phonemes, suprasegmental aspects stress, intonation or rhythm were not taken into consideration. The vision of this research was to focus on pronunciation of individual sounds. The author, as the originator of the thesis, anticipated that the students will probably have problems regarding pronunciation in specific areas. This was because there were many opportunities to hear Czech students of English before. As the author could hear how they speak and pronounce before this research, it was expected that these students as the representative sample will commit errors in pronouncing those vowels and consonants which do not occur in Czech but do in English. Thus, it was expected that vowel sounds /æ/, /ə/ or /ɜ:/ will be mispronounced. As for consonants, phonemes /ð/, /θ/ or /w/ were expected to be pronounced incorrectly. Linking of words is another problematic area causing problems to non-native English speakers because as has been stated in chapter 2.7.4., Czech speakers do not link words together to such a degree as English. Another problematic issue for Czech learners is the use of weak forms. As in the Czech language, vowel sound is never reduced, this may be the reason why Czech speakers do not use weak forms when speaking. Generally, the author expected that the errors committed by students will be based on the differences between the nature of Czech and English.

Thus, the question was if the above mentioned aspects are really a problematic issue or/and are there another ones? It means that one of the aims of the thesis was to find out suggestions where Czech learners will commit errors and subsequently find out what the reality is.

The author also asked a question: Why do students commit these errors? Thus, a list of theoretical justification for the errors committed is included.

3. Research Itself

There are two main types of research: quantitative and qualitative. The third one, mixed research, is practically the combination of these two research paradigms. As Johnson and Christensen claim, pure quantitative research relies on the collection of quantitative, i.e. numerical data. Pure qualitative research is primarily based on the collection of qualitative data, i.e. nonnumerical data such as words. Mixed research involves the mixing of quantitative and qualitative approaches (Johnson and Christensen, 2010, p. 33). As the author transforms the data to the numerical form, on the other hand qualitative findings are drawn up, this research can be categorized as the mixed one.

The research was designed in the following way. Firstly, the relevant literature needed to be studied carefully. Since the author wanted to test secondary school students, it had to be taken into consideration what educational institution to choose for the research implementation. In order to meet this requirement, it seemed to be a good idea to visit an institution which the author intended to choose. This was a Specialized Secondary School and Vocational School in Horky nad Jizerou. It is a state school specialized in tourism, gastronomy, services and agriculture, providing multi-level education. The first meeting took place in May, 10th 2012. After the discussion with English teachers the school was chosen for the research realization. After this, the author had to prepare a suitable text for students to

be read. The author visited the school in May, 17th 2012 in order to implement the research. Fifty-five students of the 4-year courses were included in the research. The research was designed in order to find out what aspects hinder the Czech secondary student speakers who learn English from speaking like native English speakers, as has already been mentioned. For this purpose a relatively short text has been chosen. This text was read by the students. The text can be seen below.

testing pronunciation

Box 96 Student handout

Imagine that you have just moved into a new house and are describing some of the things that you have had to buy. You start by describing what you have bought for the kitchen.

In here, the dearest things were the electrical appliances – things like a dishwasher, a fridge and a stove. There was no cutlery, so I bought some knives, forks and spoons. I'd been given some bowls, but no cups and saucers, so I bought six of each. I needed furniture, too, and curtains for some of the rooms. I had to make some difficult choices. I bought purple curtains for the dining room. That wasn't my idea, but they should look really good in there. They'll help keep out the noise. And I got a nice old wooden table and some chairs. They cost about a thousand dollars. I've painted the walls pale orange and hung a large poster near the window. And I've put an oil painting on the opposite wall with an unusual pair of lamps. Yesterday I bought blue carpet for the stairs. And I had to get a barbecue for the yard. Another job is to paint the outside of the house and the garage. I'll enjoy doing that.

© Cambridge University Press 2004

Figure 13 Student Handout (Hewings, 2004, p. 189)

On the basis of this text the author had the possibility to find out what are the problematic areas where students were likely to commit pronunciation errors. In the text there are examples of vowels, consonants, contracted forms and also areas where a native speaker would naturally use a weak form; or where another aspects of connected speech can be found.

1. The Most Frequent Pronunciation Errors

As has already been stated, the aim of the research was firstly to find out the most frequent pronunciation errors. They have been found in the areas mentioned below. Some words were mispronounced in a way that Czech (not English) sounds occurred. Thus, in such cases Czech symbols are used in order to show how words were mispronounced.

4.1.1. Vowels

/æ/ as in “had“, “lamps“, “garage“ or “that“ was pronounced as /e/ or /a/. The research has shown that out of fifty-five students forty-four mispronounced this vowel sound in the word “lamps“. As it was expected that /æ/ will be mispronounced, the high number of errors has not surprised the author. The expectations of the author were based on the fact that /æ/ does not occur in Czech but does in English. In the following examples it can be seen that in English and Czech there are words whose pronunciation may seem the same but is not. The Czech speaker may mispronounce these words very easily. Skaličková mentions example words “badly“ /bædli/ compared to “bedly“ /bedli/, “jam“ /dʒæm/ compared to “džem“ /dʒem/ or “lamb“ /læm/ compared to “lem“ /lem/ (Skaličková, 1979, p. 39). The reason why Czech students pronounced /æ/ as /a/ may be the fact that the written form of /æ/ is “a“. Since in Czech “a“ is always pronounced as /a/, this error may be called an interference.

/ɒ/ as in words “wasn’t“, “cost“, “dollars“, “orange“, “opposite“ or “job“ was pronounced as /a/. Only two students pronounced /ɒ/ incorrectly in “was“. The expectations were that this vowel sound will not cause any

difficulties in pronunciation because it exists in both languages. However; “was” was mispronounced by two students. The reason may be the fact that these students have been studying German and pronunciation of “was” is /vas/ in this language.

/ʌ/ as in words “cutlery“, “cups“, “hung“ or “unusual“ was mainly pronounced as /u/, in fewer cases as /e/. The justification for this vowel sound being mispronounced may be orthography. Since the student sees “u“, he reads it as /u/ like in Czech muž /muʒ/. In total, /ʌ/ was mispronounced eleven times in “hung“.

/ʊ/ was mispronounced mainly in “look“ and “good“ as /u:/. There were such expectations that in words such as “look“ /ʊ/ will be pronounced as /u:/. The reason may be that in English there are words where “oo“ is pronounced as /u:/ as in “proof“ /pru:f/ or root /ru:t/. Seven out of fifty-five students mispronounced /ʊ/ in “put“ as /ʌ/. In English “u“ is sometimes read as /ʌ/, which may be the reason for its mispronunciation. Example words where “u“ is read as /ʌ/ are “mum“ /mʌm/ or “gun“ /gʌn/.

/eɪ/ as in “table“ was once pronounced as /e/. As for /eɪ/, there were expectations that no problems will occur with its pronunciation.

/aɪ/ as in “appliances“ or “dining“ was often pronounced as /eɪ/ or /ɪe/, rarely even as /ɪ/, /i:/, /e/. The author was surprised that /aɪ/ in “dining“ was mispronounced by seven students, which is quite a high number. The word “dining“ /aɪ/ was often mispronounced as /dɪnɪŋ/, “appliances“ as /əpliɛnsɪs/, /əpliɛnsɪs/, /əpleɪnsɪs/ or /əpleɪnɪsɪs/. Since students had problems

to pronounce /aɪ/ which exists also in Czech, the author supposes that the majority of the students have not heard this word before.

/u:/ as in “unusual“ was pronounced as /ʊ/. What also surprised the author was the fact that four of the students pronounced “unusual“ as /ʊnʊsʊʌl/ or /ʊnʊzʊʌl/. The reason for being mispronounced as /ʊnʊsʊʌl/ is orthography. In Czech “u“ is always pronounced as /u/ as in “kur“ /kur/, “dub“ /dup/ or “tuk“ /tuk/.

/eʊ/ as in “stove“ was pronounced as /ou/, rarely as /u:/. Since /eʊ/ is a diphthong which does not occur in Czech, it was expected that there may be problems with its pronunciation. These expectations proved to be rational because thirty-three out of fifty-five students mispronounced this diphthong. The error justification is following. Since in Czech there is /ou/ and not /eʊ/, many students pronounced it as the Czech diphthong.

/aʊ/ as in “house“ or “outside“ was pronounced as /ou/. As “house“ is a word which belongs to a basic vocabulary of any English learner, it was not expected that any student may mispronounce it anyhow. In addition, in Czech this diphthong occurs, too. Thus, the author was wholly surprised that /aʊ/ was mispronounced. Since in “ou“ is always pronounced as /ou/, the error justification is orthography. Example words in Czech are “louka“ /louka/, “mouka“ /mouka/ or “houkat“ /houkat/.

/ɪə/ as in “here“, “dearest“, “idea“ was pronounced as /ɜ:/, /ea/, /i:/. As for /ɪə/, the expectations were that the diphthong may be difficult to pronounce because, again, in Czech there is no such a diphthong. Thus, nine students mispronounced this phoneme in “idea“. This word was mainly

mispronounced as /aɪdi:/. In some English words “ea” is pronounced as /i:/ as in “tea” /ti:/ or “eat” /i:t/. Thus, “idea” was pronounced as /aɪdi:/. As has already been stated, “idea” was also pronounced as /ɪdeɪ/. In this case, mispronunciation was caused by the orthography. Another word where /ɪə/ was pronounced incorrectly was, for example, “here” which was sometimes pronounced as /hɜ:r/.

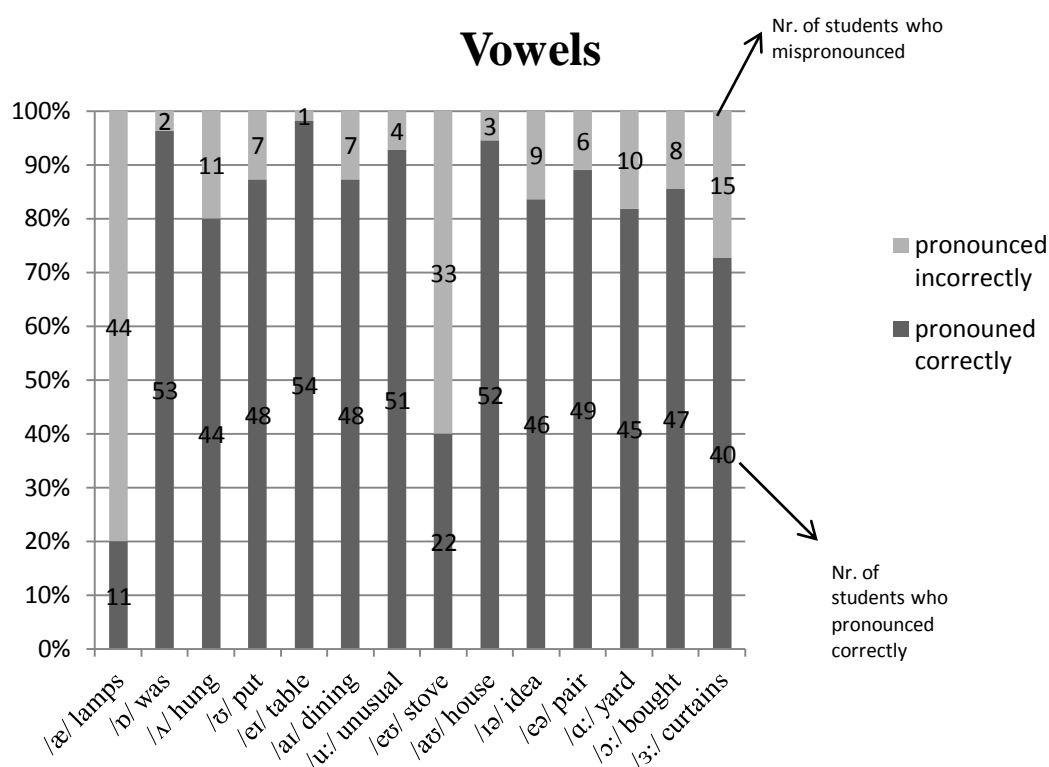
/eə/ as in “stairs” or “pair” was pronounced as /aɪ/, /eɪ/. Six out of fifty-five students mispronounced /eə/ in “pair”. Since this diphthong also does not exist in Czech, the expectations were that even more than six students may mispronounce it.

/a:/ as in “carpet”, “yard” was pronounced as /ʌ/, /e/ or /i:/. In this case, the author’s expectations were not identical with the reality. As /a:/ is a vowel sound which Czechs should pronounce easily because it does exist in Czech, it was expected that students will not have a problem to pronounce “yard” correctly. However; the reality was different. Many students mispronounced “yard” as /jʌrd/, /jerd/ or /ji:rd/. The reason may be that students did not know the word.

/ɔ:/ as in “bought”, “saucers”, “wall” was pronounced as /ou/, /aʊ/, /ʌ/. Despite expectations, /ɔ:/ in “bought” was mispronounced eight times. The author did expect a lower number of mispronunciations because this vowel sound does exist in Czech. Thus, it should not be difficult for Czechs to pronounce it correctly. When mispronounced as /ou/, the reason may be the orthography. Since in Czech “ou” is a diphthong which is pronounced as /ou/, students may mispronounce it like this. When “au” in “saucers” was

pronounced as /aʊ/, the reason may be the same. When “wall“ was mispronounced as /wʌl/, the reason may, again, be orthography.

/ɜ:/ as in “furniture“, “curtains“ or “purple“ was pronounced as /u:/, /ʊ/, /ʌ/ or /a:/. As for /ɜ:/, the expectations were that students will have problems to pronounce this vowel sound because it does not occur in the Czech phonological system. Thus, /ɜ:/ in “curtains“ was mispronounced fifteen times often as /ʊ/ or /ʌ/. In other words it was pronounced also as /u:/ or /a:/.



Graph 1 (Graph of Vowels – Author’s Own Modification)

4.1.2. Consonants

/k/ as in “cutlery“ was twice mispronounced as /ts/. The author did not expect that any problem with pronunciation of /k/ may occur because this consonant does exist in Czech, as well as in English. However; its articulation

is not the same. In English /k/ is aspirated, in Czech it is not. Skaličková compares words “kýl”/“keel” or “kůl”/“cool” (Skaličková, 1979, p. 104). The error justification is in this case orthography. In Czech the letter *c* is always pronounced as /ts/.

/tʃ/ as in “furniture” was pronounced as /t/ or /ʃ/. As for /tʃ/, the author did not expect problems with its articulation. In this case, the articulation as such may not be the problem because /tʃ/ occurs in Czech, too. Example Czech words are: “čín” /tʃín/, “kočka” /kotʃka/ or “míč” /mi:tʃ/. Compared to Czech, in English /tʃ/ is never assimilated. Compare English “matchbox” /mætʃbɒks/ and Czech “léčba” /lɛ:dʒba/ (Skaličková, 1979, p. 110). In this case, the error justification may be the fact that students either did not know the word or they saw “t” in “furniture” so they pronounced /t/. If so, the reason may be orthography.

/v/ as in “of” was pronounced as /f/. Concretely in this case, the author expected the high number of mispronunciations. It proved that thirty-seven out of fifty-five students mispronounced /v/ in “of”. As has already been mentioned in chapter 2.6.2., in Czech, unlike English, if the voiced consonant which has its voiceless constituent occurs at the end of a word, it is pronounced as voiceless. In this case /v/ becomes /f/ in final position in Czech. Example words are: “lov” /lof/, “nov” /nof/, “kov” /kof/. Thus, we can consider this error as an interference.

/θ/ as in “things” or “thousand” was mainly pronounced as /s/ and also as /f/ or /t/. It was expected that /θ/ will be difficult to pronounce because this phoneme does not occur in the Czech language. In total, /θ/ in “thousand”

was mispronounced twenty-seven times. Thus, the expectations were identical with the reality.

/ð/ as in “the“, “there“, “that“, “they“, “with“, “another“ pronounced as /dz/, /d/, /z/, /s/. Since /ð/ does not occur in the Czech phonological system, it was expected that students may mispronounce it. Seventeen students mispronounced /ð/ in “another“, which is comparable with the reality.

/s/ as in “so“ was pronounced as /z/. As for /s/, it was not expected that there may be a problem with its pronunciation. The justification for pronunciation “so“ as /zɔ:/ is following. In German “so“ exists, as in English, but it is pronounced as /zɔ:/. As the student who mispronounced it in the way it had been studied German, the influence of this language is evident.

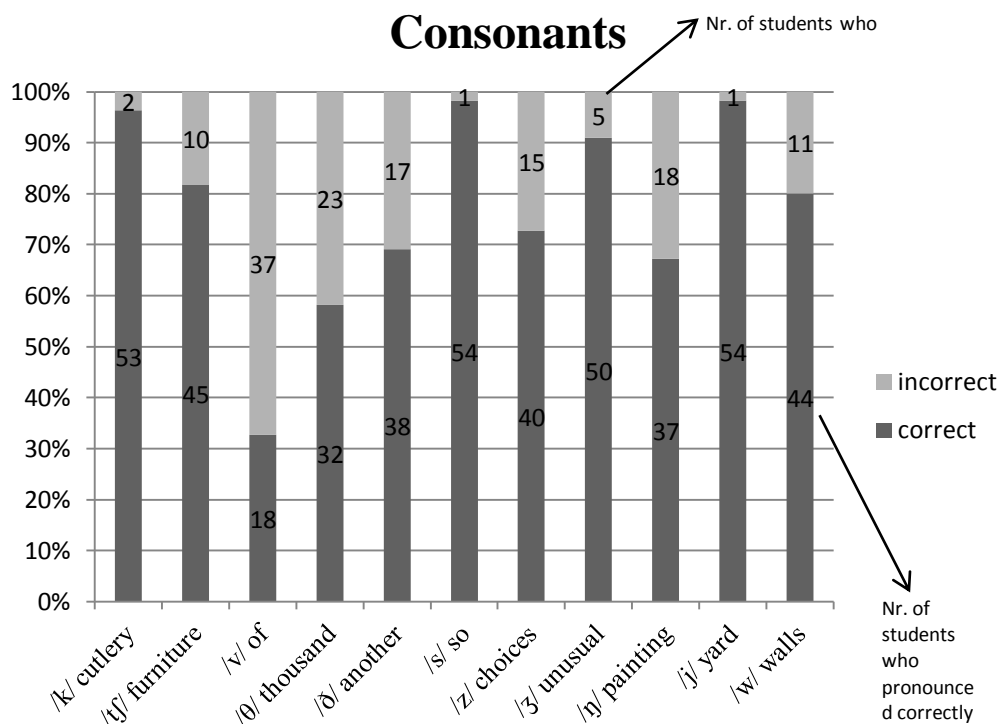
/z/ as in “appliances“, “saucers“, “choices“, “noise“, “chairs“, “thousand“, “dollars“, “opposite“ or “stairs“ was pronounced as /s/. Although /z/ does occur in Czech, it was expected that in particular positions it will not be pronounced. As has already been mentioned in chapter 2.6.2., Czech speakers mispronounce /z/ mainly when it occurs in plural form of nouns and in verbs in 3rd person singular. This proved to be true. Fifteen students mispronounced this phoneme in “choices“.

/ʒ/ as in “unusual“, “garage“ was pronounced as /z/, /dʒ/. The author expected that there will be no difficulties with pronunciation of /ʒ/ because it occurs in Czech. Example words where /ʒ/ occurs are “žirafa“ /ʒirafa/ or “žito“ /ʒito/. The reality is that /ʒ/ was mispronounced five times in “unusual“.

/ŋ/ as in “painting“ was pronounced as /ng/, /nk/. Since /ŋ/ is not, unlike English, an individual phoneme but a positional variation of /n/, it was expected to be mispronounced. In Czech /ŋ/ appears before /k/, /g/. Compare Czech words “srnka“ /srŋka/ vs. “srna“ /srna/ and “Hanka“ /haŋka/ vs. “Hana“ /hana/ (Skaličková, 1979, p. 136). Eighteen students mispronounced /ŋ/ in “painting“.

/j/ as in “yard“ was pronounced as /dʒ/. As for /j/, no problems with its articulation were expected. Only one student mispronounced /j/ in “yard“ as /dʒ/. In this case, no rational error justifications are suggested.

/w/ as in “was“, “walls“, “window“ was pronounced as /v/. Since /w/ does not occur in Czech, many cases of mispronunciation were expected. In total, /w/ in “walls“ was mispronounced eleven times. As the author expected, /w/ was mispronounced as the Czech /v/. As /w/ does not occur in Czech, “whiskey“ is usually pronounced as /viski/.

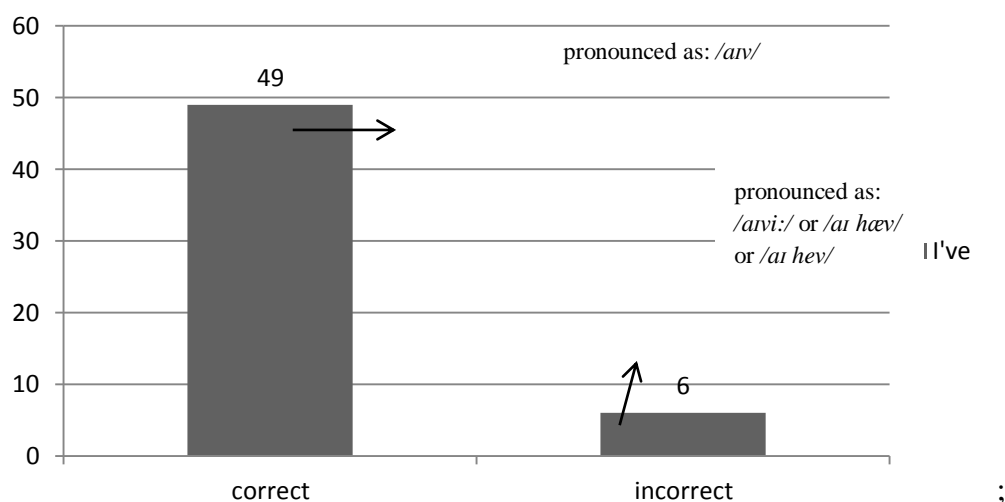


Graph 2 (Graph of Consonants – Author’s Own Modification)

4.1.3. Contracted forms

It was not expected that there would be any problems with pronunciation of contracted forms. However; “I’ve“ was mispronounced six times. Students mispronounced it as /aj vi:/. In other cases, instead of contracted form, long form was used. The long form “I have“ was sometimes mispronounced as /aj hev/.

Since contracted forms are much more frequent than long forms while speaking, their pronunciation is important (Huang, 2008, p. 208).



Graph 3 (Graph of Contracted Forms – Author’s Own Modification)

4.1.4. Aspects of Connected Speech

As for the aspects of connected speech, the author focused the research on the use of links and weak forms.

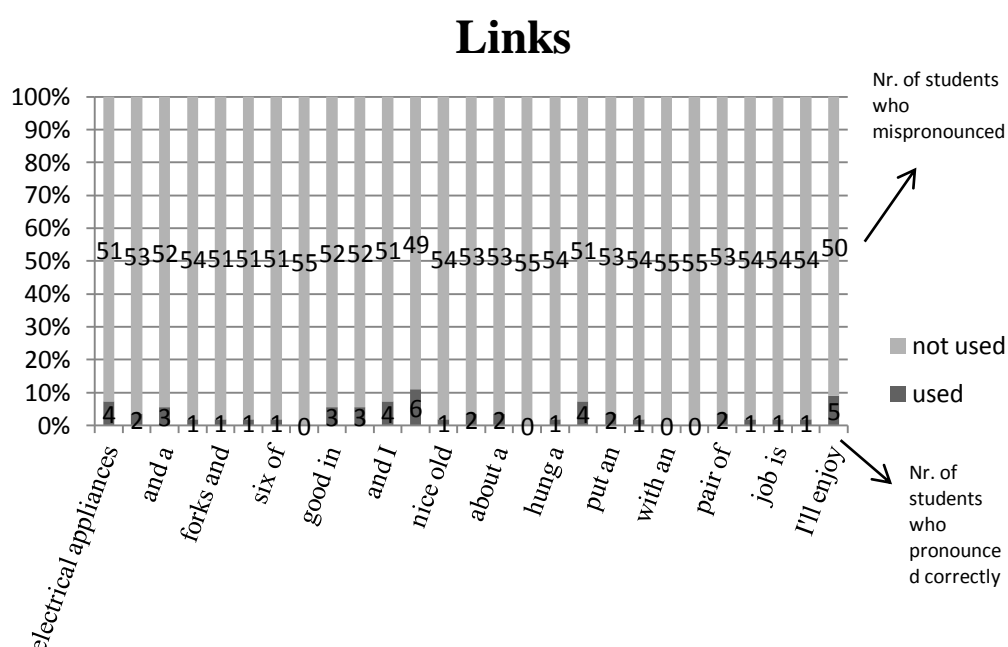
The process of linking words together is an important aspect of natural speech in English. As the consequence, when used while speaking it results in fluency of one’s speech. Thus, the author considers the process of liaison as an important aspect of connected speech and the research was designed to find out to what extent do Czech students link words.

As has been stated in 2.7.5., it is generally claimed that Czech speakers often use too many strong forms, which hinders them to sound native-like. Thus, the author wanted to find out what the reality is and focused on this aspect in the research.

4.1.4.1. Links

Since, as has already been mentioned, Czech speakers generally do not link words together much when speaking, the author expected that the students will not use liaison very often. After looking at the *Figure 18* it can be seen that the students did employ liaison to their speech hardly ever.

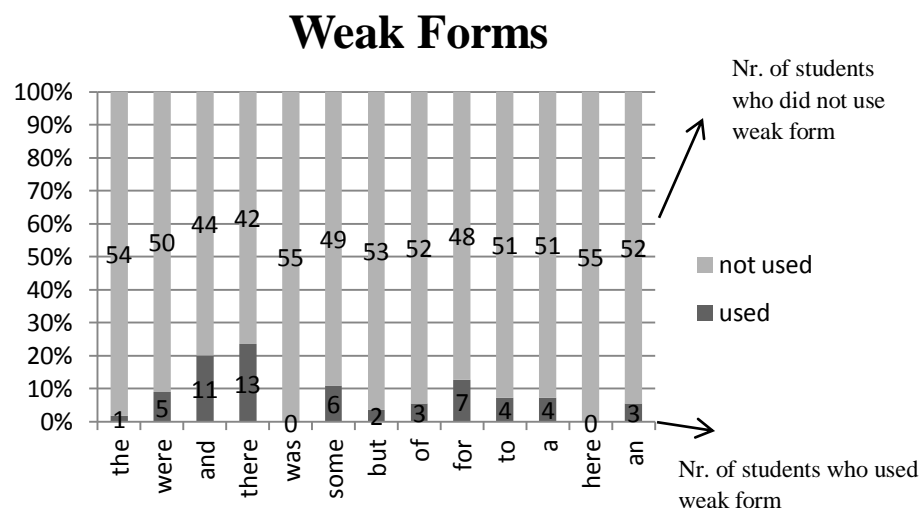
In the text there are certain passages which were observed. In these passages a native speaker would link words together. From the *Figure 18* it is evident where liaison was used or not.



Graph 4 (Graph of Links – Author’s Own Modification)

4.1.4.2. Weak Forms

As can be concluded from the graph portrayed in *Graph 5*, the students did not use weak forms much while reading the text. Concrete numbers can be seen in *Graph 5*. It proved that the reality is identical with the author’s expectations.



Graph 5 (Graph of Weak Forms – Author’s Own Modification)

2. The Most Serious Pronunciation Errors

One of the aims of the research was to find out what are the most serious errors committed by the students. As stated in chapter 2.1., pronunciation errors have a various degree of seriousness. It means that the most frequent errors are not always the most serious. These are mistakes which may cause misunderstanding and hinder communication, which is undesirable.

What, for example, came out from the research was that if a student says /aɪ bɔ:t sʌm naɪfs, fɔ:ks ænd spu:nz/ instead of /aɪ bɔ:t sʌm naɪfs, fɔ:ks ænd spu:nz/, the mispronunciation of final /s/ in “spoons“ is not a serious mistake at all, even though this error is a very frequent one. This is because this error does not cause any misunderstanding, which is important. On the other hand, if a student says /aɪ bɔ:t sʌm naɪfs, fɔ:ks ænd spu:nz/ instead of /aɪ bɔ:t sʌm naɪfs, fɔ:ks ænd spu:nz/, the mispronounced vowel sound in “bought“ may hinder communication. Thus, it is a serious one. Firstly, because when “bought“ is pronounced as /bɔ:t/ it does have a completely different meaning,

which can easily confuse the listener. Secondly, since what is mispronounced is a verb and it is a necessary component of all sentences, it may be impossible for the listener to understand the sentence. As a verb is often defined as a word which shows action or state of being, is often the most important step in understanding the meaning of a sentence (<http://esl.us.com/LESSONS/GRAMMAR/POS/pos3.htm>).

The following errors were chosen from the most frequent ones as the most serious. The selection was based on the fact that serious errors may lead even to misunderstanding so that the process of communication may be broken.

4.2.1. Vowels

4.2.1.1. Distinction Between /æ/, /e/ and /ʌ/

Mispronunciation of /æ/ may be considered a serious error in certain situations. Compare words “man“ /mæn/ vs. “men“ /men/, “bed“ /bed/ vs. “bad“ /bæd/, “tan“ /tæn/ vs. “ten“ /ten/, “pan“ /pæn/ vs. “pun“ /pʌn/. Such a word which occurs in the text where distinction between /æ/ and /e/ has to be made is in the case of “had“ /hæd/ vs. “head“ /hed/.

4.2.1.2. Distinction Between /ʌ/ and /ʊ/

Since it was observed that students sometimes mispronounced /ʌ/ as /ʊ/, here are some examples demonstrating the importance of its correct pronunciation. In the following words, the distinction between /ʌ/ as /ʊ/ must be made. As some of the students pronounced “cutlery“ as /kʊtləri/, it is possible that “cut“ /kʌt/ might be mispronounced as /kʊt/. This is very similar to another word with a completely different meaning, “could“ /kʊd/.

4.2.1.3. Distinction Between /ɪə/ and /ɜ:/

Sometimes students mispronounced /ɪə/ as /ɜ:/. This may easily lead to misunderstanding, as well. An example which demonstrates that to make distinction between /ɪə/ as /ɜ:/ is important is following. Compare words from the text: “here“ /hɪə/, sometimes mispronounced as /hɜ:r/, vs. “her“ /hɜ:r/.

4.2.1.4. Distinction Between /ɔ:/, /əʊ/ and Czech /ou/

As the research has shown, many students mispronounced /ɔ:/ as the Czech diphthong /ou/. This case of inaccuracy may hinder communication, too. Students often struggled with pronunciation of “bought“ /bɔ:t/. Sometimes it was mispronounced as /bout/. This sounds almost like “boat“ /bəʊt/, which has a completely different meaning. Compare also “so“ /səʊ/ with “saw“ /sɔ:/.

4.2.1.5. Long vs. Short Vowels

The distinction between short and long vowel sounds must be made. In English sometimes the mispronunciation of short vowel as a long vowel or vice versa may change the meaning. Such situation may occur in words like: “wheat“ /wi:t/ and “wit“ /wɪt/, “pool“ /pu:l/ and “pull“ /pʊl/, “feel“ /fi:l/ and “fill“ /fɪl/. Such a word which occurs in the text where distinction between short and long vowel has to be made is in the case of “too“ /tu:/ and “to“ /tʊ/.

4.2.2. Consonants

4.2.2.1. Distinction Between /θ/ and /s/

On the basis of the research, /θ/ was one of the most often mispronounced consonants. In addition, mispronunciation of /θ/ may have

significant consequences of breaking down communication. As the research has shown, /θ/ was mainly pronounced as /s/. Compare the words “thin“ /θɪn/ vs. “sin“ /sɪn/, “think“ /θɪŋk/ vs. “sink“ /sɪŋk/, “thought“ /θɔ:t/ vs. “sort“ /sɔ:t/. It can be seen that these words are completely different in meaning.

4.2.2.2. Distinction Between /ð/, /z/ and /s/

Another consonant which was often mispronounced is /ð/. Since the students pronounced it as also as /z/ or /s/, there are some examples which show that it is important to differentiate between /ð/, /s/ and /z/. Compare: “seethe“ /si:ð/ vs. “Cs“ /si:z/, “with“ /wɪθ/ vs. “whizz“ /wɪz/, “scythe“ /saɪð/ vs. “size“ /saɪz/. Since an individual phoneme may change the meaning of words, it is important to pronounce each phoneme correctly.

4.2.2.3. Distinction Between /n/ and /ŋ/

Students also struggled with pronunciation of /ŋ/. Here are some examples demonstrating the importance of its correct pronunciation. Compare “thin“ /θɪn/ and “thing“ /θɪŋ/, “ton“ /tʌn/ and “tongue“ /tʌŋ/, “sun“ /sʌn/ and “sung“ /sʌŋ/.

5. Conclusion

The aim of the thesis was to find out what are the most frequent and most significant pronunciation errors committed by the students when speaking English. The errors subsequently needed to be analysed.

Thus, the research was designed in order to meet these requirements. As the result, the most frequent and serious pronunciation errors were found and

analysed. Since the author expected where the students may commit errors, it was proved if the expectations were identical with the reality.

On the basis of the research, the author found out that the most frequent errors were committed in the area of vowels, consonants, contracted forms, weak forms and linking. As has already been mentioned, the most frequent errors are not always the most serious. These are the mistakes which may cause misunderstanding and hinder communication, which is undesirable. To prevent this situation, the author also wanted to find out what are the mistakes which may hinder communication. As the research has shown, the pronunciation errors which may lead to misunderstanding are mispronunciation of vowels and consonants. A detailed analysis can be found in the practical part of the thesis.

Another area the author focused on was the use of the aspects of connected speech when speaking. If the use of aspects of connected speech does correlate with proficiency of a speaker, the findings based on the research show that proficiency of the students included into the research is not very high. It was proved, that absence of the aspects of connected speech when speaking does not hinder communication.

6. List of References

1. Bibliography

ASHBY, Patricia. *Speech Sounds*. Great Britain: Routledge, 2005. ISBN 0415341878.

BAJPAI, Naval. *Business Research Methods*. India: Dorling Kindersley (India) Pvt. Ltd, 2011. ISBN 9788131754481.

BOYER, Susan. *Understanding Spoken English: A Focus on Everyday Language in Context, Book One: A Focus on Everyday Speech in Context*. Glenbrook, Australia: Boyer Educational Resources, 2003. ISBN 187707408.

BROWN, Adam. *Teaching English Pronunciation: A Book of Readings*. England: Routledge, 1991. ISBN 0415059607.

COLLINS, Inger M. MEES and MEES. *Phonetics of English: Daniel Jones: Selected Works*. London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2003. ISBN 0415233372.

CONCEPCION, P. G., E. M. DE LA CRUZ and L. P. ENRIQUEZ. *Speech Communication for Filipinos*. Florentino St., Quezon City: Rex Bookstore, Inc., 1994. ISBN 9712314308.

CRYSTAL, David. *Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2008. ISBN 9781405152969.

FROMKIN, Victoria, Robert RODMAN a Nina HYAMS. *An Introduction to Language: Ninth Edition*. USA: Wadsworth Publishing, 2010. ISBN 1428263926.

GENETTI, Carol. *A grammar of Dolakha Newar*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2007. ISBN 9783110193039.

GIEGERICH, Heinz J. *English Phonology: An Introduction*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1992. ISBN 0521333032.

HEWINGS, Martin. *Pronunciation Practice Activities: A Resource Book for Teaching English Pronunciation*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2004. ISBN 0521754577.

HUANG, Xu. *Advances in Communication Systems and Electrical Engineering*. USA: Springer, 2008. ISBN 9780387749372.

JOHNSON, Burke a Larry B. CHRISTENSEN. *Educational Research: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Approaches*. USA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2010. ISBN 9781412978286.

JONES, Daniel. *An Outline of English Phonetics*. Cambridge: Works of W. Heffer & Sons Ltd., 1956. ISBN 0521290414.

KHAN, Mohd. Sharif. *Educational Research*. New Delhi: A P H Publishing Corporation, 2008. ISBN 8176484822.

KRČMOVÁ, Marie. *Fonetika a fonologie: Zvuková stavba současné češtiny*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 1996. ISBN 8021013761.

LADEFOGED, Peter. *Vowels and Consonants: An Introduction to the Sounds of Languages*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2005. ISBN 1405124598.

MARKS, Jonathan. *English Pronunciation in Use: Self-study and Classroom Use. Elementary*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2007. ISBN 9780521672665.

MENHARD, Zdeněk. *A Workbook in English Phonetics*. Příbram: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství Praha, 1982. ISBN 1021-3454.

MIELKE, Jeff. *The Emergence of Distinctive Features*. USA: Oxford University Press, 2008. ISBN 0199233373.

O'CONNOR, J. D. *Better English Pronunciation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980. ISBN 0521231523.

OLIVE, Joseph P., Alice GREENWOOD and John S. COLEMAN. *Acoustics of American English Speech: A Dynamic Approach*. USA: Springer, 1993. ISBN 0387979840.

PALKOVÁ, Zdena. *Fonetika a fonologie češtiny*. Praha: Karlova Univerzita, 1994. ISBN 9788070668436.

ROACH, Peter. *English Phonetics and Phonology: A Practical Course*. United Kingdom, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. ISBN 9780521717403.

SKALIČKOVÁ, Alena. *Srovnávací fonetika češtiny a angličtiny*. Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1979.

SKANDERA, Paul a Peter BURLEIGH. *A Manual of English Phonetics and Phonology*. Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto Verlag, 2011. ISBN 09418105.

STANKIEWICZ, Edward. *The Accentual Patterns of the Slavic Languages*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1993. ISBN 0804720290.

VAN GELDEREN, Elly. *A History of the English Language*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2006. ISBN 9027232369.

WALLWORK, Adrian. *English for Presentations at International Conferences*. London: Springer, 2010. ISBN 9781441965905.

WELLS, John Christopher. *Accents of English: An Introduction*. USA: Cambridge University Press, 1982. ISBN 0521297192.

WHITLEY, Melvin Stanley. *Spanish/English Contrasts: A Course in Spanish Linguistics*. USA: Georgetown University Press, 2002. ISBN 0878403817.

YULE, George. *The Study of Language*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010. ISBN 9780521765275.

2. Internet Resources

Aspects of Connected Speech. *Phonology and Phonetics Review* [online]. 2010 [cit. 2012-05-21]. Available at: http://www.llas.ac.uk/materialsbank/mb081/page_19.htm

Aspects Of Connected Speech. *Slideshare.net* [online]. 2008 [cit. 2012-06-07]. Available at: <http://www.slideshare.net/cupidlucid/aspects-of-connected-speech-presentation>

Burmese Grammar 1899. *BG1899* [online]. 2008 [cit. 2012-04-03]. Available at: <http://www.tuninst.net/Romabama/Bur-Gramm1899/ch02/ch02.htm>

Connected Speech and Coarticulation. *Connected Speech and Coarticulation* [online]. 2002 [cit. 2012-05-10]. Available at: <http://www.personal.rdg.ac.uk/~llsroach/phon2/asscoareli-into.htm>

Český vokální systém. *FruFru's PhonoWeb* [online]. 2009 [cit. 2012-03-30]. Available at: <https://sites.google.com/site/frufusphonoweb/cz---kapitoly/samohlasky/system-ceskych-samohlasek>

English diphthongs. *SlideServe* [online]. 2004 [cit. 2012-03-27]. Available at: <http://www.slideserve.com/nuncio/english-diphthongs>

English Pronunciation Rules. *Viv Quarry* [online]. 2008 [cit. 2012-06-22]. Available at: <http://www.vivquarry.com/wkshts/pron.html>

Ghinwa: Alameen. *The Use of Linking by Native and Non-native Speakers of American English* [online]. 2010 [cit. 2012-06-07]. Available at:
<http://books.google.cz/books?id=-tsAgLJm1w8C&pg=PA19&dq=connected+speech+proficiency&hl=cs&sa=X&ei=XaXQT9TWJY25hAed6cTzCw&ved=0CFQQ6AEwBQ#v=onepage&q=connected%20speech%20proficiency&f=false>

Grammar - Parts of Speech - Verbs. *Free on-line English lessons - grammar practice* [online]. 2002 [cit. 2012-06-25]. Available at:
<http://eslus.com/LESSONS/GRAMMAR/POS/pos3.htm>

How many English native speakers are there in the world?. *Answers.com* [online]. 2012 [cit. 2012-03-13]. Available at:
http://wiki.answers.com/Q/How_many_English_native_speakers_are_there_in_the_world

Importance of Teaching English Pronunciation. *Scribd Home* [online]. 2012 [cit. 2012-05-09]. Available at: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/12593605/importance-of-Teaching-English-Pronunciation>

Pronunciation - Definition and pronunciation | Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary at OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com. *"Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary App"* [online]. 2012 [cit. 2012-06-21]. Available at:
<http://oald8.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/dictionary/pronunciation>

Second Entry... The Vowels. *TheFanaticsOfPhonetics* [online]. 2009 [cit. 2012-03-27]. Available at: <http://thefanaticsofphonetics.blogspot.com/2009/12/what-are-vowels-vowels-are-sounds-in.html>

SpeechMasters - #6 Connected Speech. *Connected Speech* [online]. 2012 [cit. 2012-05-10]. Available at: <http://www.mastersspokenenglish.com/6connectedpg.htm>

TESOL Articles | Phonetics - Phonology. *Phonetics and TESOL* [online]. 2010 [cit. 2012-06-03]. Available at: <http://www.tesolcourse.com/tesol-articles/phonetics-phonology/>

Tips for improving English pronunciation | Pronunciation Tips. *Pronunciation Tips* [online]. 2012 [cit. 2012-05-08]. Available at: <http://pronunciationtips.com/>

VOWEL QUALITY – FREE VOWEL QUALITY information | Encyclopedia.com: Find VOWEL QUALITY research. *'Encyclopedia.com Trending Topics'* [online]. 1998 [cit. 2012-05-09]. Available at: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O29-VOWELQUALITY.html>

VOWEL QUANTITY – FREE VOWEL QUANTITY information | Encyclopedia.com: Find VOWEL QUANTITY research. *'Encyclopedia.com Trending Topics'* [online]. 1998 [cit. 2012-05-09]. Available at: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O29-VOWELQUANTITY.html>

Vowel. *Vowel - encyclopedia article - Citizendium* [online]. 2010 [cit. 2012-03-31]. Available at: <http://en.citizendium.org/wiki/Vowel>

www.ugr.es - Google Keyword - Website-Tools.net. *www.ugr.es* [online]. 2001 [cit. 2012-03-13]. Available at: <http://website-tools.net/google-keyword/site/www.ugr.es>

Znělé a neznělé souhlásky na konci slov - Help For English - Angličtina na internetu zdarma!. *Help For English* [online]. 2009 [cit. 2012-06-22]. Available at: <http://www.helpforenglish.cz/vyslovnost/c2009012002-znele-a-neznele-souhlasky-na-konci-slov.html>

7. Appendices

Table of Appendices:

Student Handout 1	Appendix A
Student Handout 2.....	Appendix B
Student Handout 3.....	Appendix C

Appendix A

Testing pronunciation

2.13 MALE

Box 96 Student handout

Imagine that you have just moved into a new house and are describing some of the things that you have had to buy. You start by describing what you have bought for the kitchen.

In here, the dearest things were the electrical appliances – things like a dishwasher, a fridge and a stove. There was no cutlery, so I bought some knives, forks and spoons. I'd been given some bowls, but no cups and saucers, so I bought six of each. I needed furniture, too, and curtains for some of the rooms. I had to make some difficult choices. I bought purple curtains for the dining room. That wasn't my idea, but they should look really good in there. They'll help keep out the noise. And I got a nice old wooden table and some chairs. They cost about a thousand dollars. I've painted the walls pale orange and hung a large poster near the window. And I've put an oil painting on the opposite wall with an unusual pair of lamps. Yesterday I bought blue carpet for the stairs. And I had to get a barbecue for the yard. Another job is to paint the outside of the house and the garage. I'll enjoy doing that.

© Cambridge University Press 2004

Appendix B

Testing pronunciation

3.14 MALE

Box 96 Student handout

Imagine that you have just moved into a new house and are describing some of the things that you have had to buy. You start by describing what you have bought for the kitchen.

In here, the dearest things were the electrical appliances – things like a dishwasher, a fridge and a stove. There was no cutlery, so I bought some knives, forks and spoons. I'd been given some bowls, but no cups and saucers, so I bought six of each. I needed furniture, too, and curtains for some of the rooms. I had to make some difficult choices. I bought purple curtains for the dining room. That wasn't my idea, but they should look really good in there. They'll help keep out the noise. And I got a nice old wooden table and some chairs. They cost about a thousand dollars. I've painted the walls pale orange and hung a large poster near the window. And I've put an oil painting on the opposite wall with an unusual pair of lamps. Yesterday I bought blue carpet for the stairs. And I had to get a barbecue for the yard. Another job is to paint the outside of the house and the garage. I'll enjoy doing that.

© Cambridge University Press 2004

Appendix C

2.A MALE Testing pronunciation

Box 96 Student handout

Imagine that you have just moved into a new house and are describing some of the things that you have had to buy. You start by describing what you have bought for the kitchen.

In here, the dearest things were the electrical appliances – things like a dishwasher, a fridge and a stove. There was no cutlery, so I bought some knives, forks and spoons. I'd been given some bowls, but no cups and saucers, so I bought six of each. I needed furniture, too, and curtains for some of the rooms. I had to make some difficult choices. I bought purple curtains for the dining room. That wasn't my idea, but they should look really good in there. They'll help keep out the noise. And I got a nice old wooden table and some chairs. They cost about a thousand dollars. I've painted the walls pale orange and hung a large poster near the window. And I've put an oil painting on the opposite wall with an unusual pair of lamps. Yesterday I bought blue carpet for the stairs. And I had to get a barbecue for the yard. Another job is to paint the outside of the house and the garage. I'll enjoy doing that.

© Cambridge University Press 2004